Women as they are by Mrs. Parsons

Vide. Vol. II. Page 205.

Women as they are by Mrs. Parsons

Vide. Vol. II. Page 205.

Cup. 403. y. 11.

WOMEN

AS

THEY ARE.

A NOVEL,

IN FOUR VOLUMES,

BY MRS. PARSONS.

AUTHOR OF MYSTERIOUS WARNINGS, &c.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR WILLIAM LANE,
AT THE
Minerva-Press,
LEADENHALL-STREET.

M.DCC.XCVI.

TO

MRS. ANSON,

OF

SHUCKBOROUGH-MANOR,

STAFFORDSHIRE.

MADAM,

WHEN I take the liberty to inſcribe the following Work to you, I have not the preſumption to think the offering in the ſmalleſt degree adequate to the favours and indulgence

I have received from you and your truly reſpectable family. I gratify my own feelings, not your's,—for I take equal pride and pleaſure to myſelf in acknowledging, thus publicly, the lively ſenſe I entertain of the diſtinction I have been honoured with.

Addreſſes of this kind are too generally the vehicle for fulſome adulation, and originate from ſelfiſh and intereſted views. In the few dedications I have been permitted to make, I have been ſingularly fortunate: characters ſo juſtly diſtinguiſhed and admired by the world could derive no additional luſtre from the panegyrics of my pen, any more than their conſequence could be diminiſhed by their condeſcenſion in my favour; — virtues that eſtabliſh themſelves in the eye of diſcrimination, can neither

neither be affected by the one nor the other.

'Tis this conviction, madam, that emboldens me to prefix *your* name to an addreſs warm from the heart of gratitude, where any attempt to praiſe, or diſplay, virtues and accompliſhments known and acknowledged by a whole county, and a large circle of admiring friends, would be futile and unneceſſary, and therefore happily ſpares me on a ſubject I am little capable of doing juſtice to.

I have only then, madam, to requeſt your acceptance of this trifling mark of my reſpect, and entreat pardon for ſheltering it under your patronage without firſt obtaining your permiſſion.—

Permit

Permit the motive to ſanctify the deed, —an earneſt deſire of avowing myſelf with all poſſible reſpect and gratitude,

MADAM,

Your much obliged and

Moſt obedient Servant,

ELIZA PARSONS.

London,
Nov. 1, 1796.

WOMEN AS THEY ARE.

LETTER I.

MISS BOYLE TO MRS. ROWE.

MRS. Cranfield and my mother have ſucceeded, as I expected. When, indeed, did the latter ever fail in a point ſhe was reſolved to carry? My father has been compelled to reſcind his "determined reſolution," and ſubmits to the more abſolute deciſion of my mother, who never yet

knew what it was to recede from *her* determinations, doubtleſs from a thorough conviction of the infallibility of her own judgment. Forgive me, my dear madam, if I ſeem to ſpeak with ſome aſperity of a parent's conduct: you, I am ſure, will no more allow of any improper reflections, than I ſhould forgive myſelf, if I ſuffered my pen to take undue liberties with a character I have ever been taught to hold ſacred: but you have always known the inmoſt receſſes of my heart; and, if I know any thing of myſelf, I feel the partiality, not to ſay injuſtice, of the plan now irrevocably determined on, infinitely leſs on my own account, than as it muſt materially injure my brother.

Though a reſident ſome years (years of happineſs to me!) in our family, I believe you were but little acquainted with its hiſtory, and the particulars I am now going to relate were communicated, a very ſhort time ſince, by my dear father, in one of our

our evening-walks. My father, at the age of twenty-five, ſucceeded to an unincumbered eſtate of ſixteen hundred a year. His marriage with my mother was an union of hearts. She had been deprived of her parents at a very early age, and was left with twelve thouſand pounds, in the guardianſhip of Mr. and Mrs. Cranfield; the latter was her aunt. When very young, ſhe gave promiſe of that beauty which was afterwards ſo much admired, and of which ſhe ſtill retains a conſiderable ſhare. I have a thouſand times been inſulted by Mrs. Cranfield, by mortifying compariſons between the beauty of my mother's portrait, and the want of attraction in her eldeſt daughter's; and, to the conviction of being deficient in perſonal beauty, I am certainly indebted for the application and attention which led me to profit by your excellent leſſons, in the cultivation of my mind. But to return.

Mr. and Mrs. Cranfield lived in the gay world, and ſaw a great deal of what

is termed the beſt company. They were proud of their niece. She received every poliſh a liberal education could beſtow, and was early introduced into the moſt faſhionable circles. Their expectation and ambition was to ſee her married to a man of rank, but this anxious wiſh for the aggrandiſement of their family was ſuddenly defeated by her partiality for my father. He had been choſen member for the town contiguous to his eſtates, and came to London, for the firſt time, to attend parliament. He met Mr. and Mrs. Cranfield, and their niece, at the table of a common friend; the young lady's charms were not to be viewed with impunity; and, in a few ſhort hours, my father was gone an age in love.

Being introduced to Mr. Cranfield as a young man of family and fortune, and a ſtranger to London, his lady, always fond of enlarging her circle of acquaintance, politely gave him an invitation to her houſe, which was moſt readily accepted. Not to be

be tedious, he availed himſelf of their civility, and became a conſtant gueſt; his heart was irrecoverably loſt, and their beautiful niece the ſole object of his adorations.

My father had in thoſe days, as I have heard my mother, when in good humour often avow, much manly beauty and elegance of perſon, with thoſe pleaſing inſinuating manners, which ſeldom fail of making an intereſt in the hearts of thoſe, whoſe good opinion they are deſirous of cultivating. In a ſhort time, the attachment became mutual, nor did it remain long undiſcovered by her guardians, whoſe vexation and diſappointment induced them to throw away much good advice, and raiſe every poſſible obſtacle to the union. But my mother, at that time, gave a ſpecimen of the reſolution and perſevering ſpirit, which bears all down before it: ſhe aſſerted her own rights, and pleaded ſo powerfully in favour of her inclinations; that, however reluctantly, they

were compelled to ſecede from their wiſhes, and ſubmit to her uncontroulable will.

Her fortune was ſecured for the younger children, and five hundred a year ſettled on her as a jointure. Mr. Cranfield had always declared he would make a large addition to the fortune of his niece; but a marriage that could not gratify his pride was to receive no countenance from him; and though a reluctant conſent was extorted from him, he cloſed up his money-bags, impenetrable even to the object neareſt his heart. My father, who had never reckoned on poſſeſſing any part of Mr. Cranfield's fortune, felt not the ſmalleſt diſſatisfaction; and my mother, young, much in love, and ſolely engaged by preparations for appearing in the world, in a new character, ſcarcely attended to ſo trifling a conſideration as money.

They were married, and introduced into all the polite circles with much éclat; and, as

as Mrs. Cranfield could not have a title for her niece, ſhe reſolved to make up for that deficiency, by an elegance of dreſs and equipage that ſhould at leaſt vie in appearance with a counteſs. My father was too fond of his wife, and too much gratified by the admiration ſhe excited, to make any oppoſition to meaſures that enhanced the conſequence of the woman he doated on, and gave additional brilliancy to her beauty and ſpirits. Mrs. Cranfield was the grand directreſs of all their movements, and for ſeveral months they lived in a ſtyle that required at leaſt treble the income of my father to ſupport. Nor was this all; the pleaſures of the town took faſt hold of my mother's mind, and, in the whirl of diſſipation, that warmth of affection, which had thrown her into the arms of her huſband, in oppoſition to intereſt and advice; —that paſſion, which ſhe once believed was interwoven with her exiſtence, began daily to loſe ground, and was ſoon loſt in the vortex of folly and faſhion.

The King's birth-day was a freſh call for expence. A new carriage, liveries, though both had been purchaſed within ſix months, —a ſuperb dreſs, with all its appendages, ſufficient to excite the admiration and talk of the town, were exhibited in due form; and Mrs. Cranfield had the inexpreſſible delight to read in the public papers that Mrs. Boyle, both in beauty and elegance, ſurpaſſed every ducheſs in the drawing-room.

The conſequence, to a young and inexperienced mind, tutored in the ſchool of vanity, and encouraged by a woman ſhe had been accuſtomed to look up to as a mother, may be eaſily divined. It was not ſurpriſing that ſhe grew intoxicated with adulation, and learned to ſet an undue value on her ſelf-conſequence. Alas! my dear madam, ſhe had no prudent intelligent friend, no amiable governeſs, to direct and improve the natural talents heaven had bleſſed her with. The virtues ſhe poſſeſſed

were

were all her own,—her follies impreſſed upon her by a fooliſh, vain, extravagant, woman, whoſe influence has counteracted every good purpoſe, which might otherwiſe have rendered my mother the moſt reſpectable of women.

The birth-day over, the houſe broke up; my father, with heart-felt joy, mentioned the delight he ſhould feel in introducing his lovely wife to her country-houſe, and the ſurrounding neighbourhood. This was a plan againſt which both ladies revolted. They exclaimed againſt the odious country, in ſuch a remote part of the kingdom, and openly declared for Tunbridge, as the only place tolerable and ſupportable when the town grew empty. In vain did my father implore and remonſtrate, tenderly revert to the preſent ſituation of my mother, — a ſituation that required reſt, and a ceſſation from the endleſs diſſipations in which ſhe had been engaged when in town, and the continuance of which, with its attendant

fatigues, might, in all probability, prove moſt injurious to her health and his beſt hopes. All the arguments he could deduce were fruitleſs; the plan was ſettled, and, unable to give a moment's pain to a beloved object, ſo peculiarly entitled to every tender conſideration, he ſubmitted without a murmur, though not without reluctance.

The very great expences attending his election to a ſeat in parliament, previous to his marriage, had nearly exhauſted his ready money; but his income was more than ſufficient for all his wants, and he expected every year to lay by ſome hundreds, beſides his eſtates being in a ſtate of improvement, ſeveral leaſeholds ready to fall in, and many buildings erecting on detached pieces of ground, which ſeemed every day more cultivated and valuable; he had little doubt but that he ſhould ſoon have a conſiderable addition to his rent-roll, and enable him to reimburſe his late expences,

and

and provide for future contingencies. But the plans of youthful prudence are too eaſily overthrown, when aſſailed by temptation. Love drove economy out of doors, and the idea of pleaſing the woman he loved, like the rod of Aaron, ſwallowed up all leſſer conſiderations.

The conſequence was additional embarraſſments in his circumſtances. Some thouſands were ſpent in a few months, and the old oaks fell under the axe, to raiſe a temporary ſupply.

In his wife's fortune he had only a life-intereſt, as he had generouſly ſettled it on the younger children; and, having already anticipated two years income by his expences in town, a journey to Tunbridge, which would be productive of ſtill farther demands on an exhauſted purſe, were conſiderations that gave him great uneaſineſs, though he had not the reſolution to perſiſt in an oppoſition to his wife's wiſhes, or ex-

plain to her the already-deranged ſtate of his affairs.

And here, my dear madam, I take the liberty to blame my father, for, it is probable, had he candidly laid before my mother the particulars I have been relating, ſhe wanted not ſenſe nor good-nature, nor had ſhe then acquired that ſtrong paſſion for the gaieties of the world, which, you too well know, afterwards marked her character, and ſuperceded that affection once thought immutable. Had ſhe been early acquainted with his embarraſſments, it might have ſaved both in time from many painful circumſtances; but tenderneſs and delicacy impeded confidence in ſuch points as he thought would hurt his wife's feelings, and for temporary gratifications he ſacrificed the future repoſe of his life.

To Tunbridge they went, and purſued with avidity every amuſement which the faſhion of the day held forth. The hours flew,

flew, winged with delight. Mrs. Boyle was the admiration of the male world, — the ſtandard of elegance and imitation among the females. *Some* of the latter, by their attentions ſought to conſole my father for the loſs of his wife's company, as it was a "horrid and unheard-of thing for *him* to mix in *her parties*." But he doated on his lovely Ann, had no eyes for any other woman, and paſſed the tedious hours of her abſence in reading and muſic, when he choſe to retire from the gay multitude.

Two months, paſſed at Tunbridge, added greatly to his pecuniary difficulties, and gave him unſpeakable concern. He ventured again to breathe a wiſh for a viſit to the manſion of his forefathers, and was heard now with more complacence. My mother's ſituation reſtricted her from many pleaſures; fatigue and laſſitude ſucceeded to her evening amuſements, and her perſon had loſt its elegance and lightneſs. She, therefore, began to think it neceſſary to

retire,

retire, for a ſhort time, from the gaieties ſhe could no longer enjoy without pain, and readily approved of his propoſition to leave Tunbridge.

Mrs. Cranfield made no objection to their departure, becauſe the company were now retiring to their country-ſeats, or other places of diſſipation; but ſhe warmly inſiſted that Mrs. Boyle ſhould lie-in in London, and, after that event, go to Bath for a month, and then it would be time enough to go into Wales for two or three months, before the meeting of parliament.

My father was again compelled to follow the lead of Mrs. Cranfield, and to town they came, though at a very unfaſhionable ſeaſon of the year.

They met Mr. Cranfield, who was juſt returned from a tour into Yorkſhire, where he had picked up a very diſtant relation, whom he had accidentally met with; the ſon of a clergyman, who had a large family, and

and who had been, till this chance-meeting, entirely unknown him. This young man, about two and twenty, educated for the church, was very ſenſible and prepoſſeſſing. He had pleaſed Mr. Cranfield, and he had brought him to town declaredly as his heir.

This circumſtance was by no means pleaſing to Mrs. Cranfield or her niece, and for the firſt time my father began to think of that fortune he had once heard Mr. Cranfield ſay ſhould be given to his wife; and which, now that he was apprehenſive of loſing, gave him a pang of regret on her account, knowing the derangement of his own affairs. But the regret on his ſide, and the diſpleaſure of the two ladies, availed nothing. Mr. Cranfield was delighted with his acquiſition, and pleaſed that he could bequeath his fortune to the family name.

Within ſix weeks after their arrival in town, I was uſhered into the world, to the diſſatisfaction, it ſeems, of all parties, as a boy was moſt devoutly wiſhed for.

My ill-ſtarred birth, therefore, cauſed no rejoicings, and my dear father has more than once declared that the coolneſs of my mother's regards to me, and the total neglect I experienced from all the family, firſt excited his compaſſion, and induced him to pay more attention to my infantine ſtate.

I was provided with a nurſe, as my mother could not bear the fatigue of ſuch an employment. To regain ſtrength, and recover her former beauty, ſufficiently engroſſed all her cares, and the anxious ſtudies of her aunt.

I was juſt three weeks old, when Mr. Cranfield was ſuddenly attacked by a paralytic ſtroke, which took from him the uſe of one ſide entirely. Alarmed by his ſituation, he ſent for an attorney, and made his will, nor was the precaution uſeleſs; for, in three days after, a repetition of the ſtroke ended his exiſtence. When this will was opened, how great was the mortification of the ſurvivors!

Mr.

Mr. Philip Cranfield, the young gentleman I have mentioned, was left ſole executor, on paying the following legacies. "Two thouſand pounds to Mrs. Boyle, a thouſand pounds to each of his brothers and ſiſters, and two thouſand pounds, with the town-houſe, furniture, linen, and plate, to Mrs. Cranfield, in addition to her jointure of eight hundred a year, but which, after her death, was alſo to revert to Mr. Cranfield." Theſe, with a few other legacies and annuities to ſome old ſervants, were the contents of the will.

An acquiſition of ſuch magnitude, — ſo ſudden and unlooked-for a change in circumſtances, was enough to have turned the brain of ſome men; but Mr. Philip Cranfield behaved uncommonly well, enjoyed the bequeſt with moderation and humility. He requeſted Mrs. Cranfield to direct every thing, and offered implicit obedience to her orders.

In

In the firſt tranſports of her grief, ſhe very indelicately, in preſence of my father, upbraided her niece with marrying ſo precipitately, by which raſhneſs ſhe had not only loſt the probability of being a peereſs, but alſo the whole of her dear Mr. Cranfield's fortune; who always intended to have divided his property equally *between them*, and now *ſhe* was the *ſufferer* for her niece's imprudence.

This cruel reproach ſunk deep into my father's mind, and ſtrongly affected his wife, who has but too often ſince, on the leaſt ſeeming oppoſition to her will, reminded him of the ſacrifices ſhe had made, and the fortune ſhe had eventually loſt, by giving him her hand.—But to haſten the concluſion of this tedious ſtory. The funeral over, and every thing being ſettled, the young man returned to make his father and family happy; and my father, mother, Mrs. Cranfield, the little-regarded infant, and ſervants, ſet out for Bath, where they

again

again plunged into every folly and expence. It was at this time that I attracted the notice of my father; diſguſted with the ſame routine of what was called amuſement: he ſpent much of his time at home, and began to take pleaſure in my infantine ſmiles and the dawnings of perception. My helpleſs ſtate, and the want of maternal tenderneſs, excited compaſſion and affection, and from that time I became the object of his love and never-ceaſing attention, to which, under heaven, I am indebted for every advantage I enjoy.

When the gay votaries of pleaſure began to leave Bath, my father had permiſſion to prepare for their journey into Wales. With infinite delight he availed himſelf of the preſent inclination, and we were ſoon on the road for a home he had long ſighed after.

My father's family-manſion was in Carnarvonſhire, ſituated on the ſea-coaſt, from whence

whence was a proſpect into the iſland of Angleſea; and, from a riſing wood at the back of the houſe, was ſeen the famous hills of Snowden. The eſtate was more extenſive than productive; there were but few families of faſhion in the neighbourhood; nor, however well adapted for the ſolitary or romantic mind, was it at all calculated to afford any amuſement to a fine lady; the ſeats of opulence being but thinly ſcattered in the northern parts of Wales, and the proſpects more wild and romantic than fanciful and alluring.

The ladies were thoroughly diſguſted on their firſt arrival, and every ſubſequent endeavour of my father, to amuſe and enliven her hours, had the contrary effect, and implied, in the attempt, a conſciouſneſs of ſuch deficiencies to entertain them, as they did not fail to take notice of.

They dragged on a miſerable exiſtence for ſix weeks, and then inſiſted upon returning

returning to Bath. To expoſtulate availed nothing, and to refuſe a darling wife any wiſh that "was abſolutely neceſſary to her health and happineſs," was an impoſſibility on his part; they truſted therefore to his good-nature to carry their point. The expence incident to ſuch journies was gently hinted by my father, but not attended to by my mother. He dreaded to ſpeak more plainly, leſt he ſhould wound her feelings; and ſhe ſhut her ears againſt any diſagreeable information, that might militate againſt her ſchemes of pleaſure.

To Bath they went; from Bath to London; and in London embraced with eagerneſs every faſhionable amuſement, and every expenſive pleaſure; and, when the following ſummer came, inſtead of going to that "odious Welſh caſtle," my father was prevailed upon to hire a villa in Hertfordſhire, to which they retired, for a few months, till it became requiſite for my mother to prepare

prepare for another accouchement in London.

Sixteen months after I was uſhered into the world, my ſiſter was born; and, as every body declared, was a complete beauty from the firſt hour of her exiſtence;—a circumſtance that fortunately procured for her that attention and tenderneſs from which I had been ever excluded.

Every indulgence that love and prodigality could ſuggeſt was laviſhed on this beauteous child; and every hour my mother could ſpare, from her round of engagements, was devoted to the admiration of this young reſemblance of its mother's charms. I had been chriſtened by the ſimple appellation of Mary; but ſuch a vulgar name would not ſuit a beauty. Many long conſultations took place on this important ſubject, and at length it was decided that Caroline Matilda would be elegant and faſhionable; Mrs. Cranfield obſerving, that,

as

as I grew up, and would be called Miſs Boyle, my name (which, by the bye, had been given to me in compliment to her,) would be of no conſequence.——The ſame routine of amuſements were followed, their expences daily augmented; and, in the third year of my father's marriage, he had a ſon and heir, born to an eſtate deeply mortgaged, and in circumſtances very much embarraſſed.

I ſhould have obſerved to you, that Mrs. Cranfield reſided entirely with my mother, without feeling any expence of houſekeeping, conſidering, as I have underſtood, that accommodating her niece with the uſe of her furniſhed houſe in town, was a ſufficient equivalent for the additional diſburſements herſelf and two ſervants made on my father's purſe; particularly as my mother was perſuaded all Mrs. Cranfield's ſavings would ultimately be for the benefit of her family.

I ſhall

I ſhall here conclude this packet, having an opportunity of ſending it by Mr. Gibbs; but, as I ſhall proceed in my narrative, it will quickly be followed by another, not I hope of equal bulk; for I ſhall endeavour to be leſs prolix. Adieu, my dear madam.

With all affection and gratitude,

I remain,

Your obliged,

Mary Boyle.

LET-

LETTER II.

MISS BOYLE TO MRS. ROWE.

THE birth of a ſon, ſo earneſtly wiſhed for in the firſt year of his marriage, now plunged my father into the deepeſt melancholy. The incumbrances on his eſtate, and the regular ſyſtem of expence, which no remonſtrances of his had been able to prevent, were now matters of ſerious conſideration, and at length determined him to a reſolution of ſpeaking more plainly to my mother, when he could venture to do ſo without danger.

The painful anxiety, depicted in his countenance, was not long unobſerved either by my mother or aunt. The latter, having occaſion to demand what my father thought rather too large a ſum to defray the expences of a ſplendid chriſtening, he ſeized the opportunity of explaining to Mrs. Cranfield the deranged ſtate of his affairs, and the impoſſibility of continuing an eſtabliſhment that every day increaſed his pecuniary difficulties. She heard him with either a real or an affected aſtoniſhment, and pretended the moſt diſdainful incredulity, upbraided him with parſimony and want of tenderneſs for a wife who had ſacrificed the moſt ſplendid proſpects for *him*; and who, in return, was refuſed the neceſſary indulgencies the pooreſt mechanic gave to his wife, in a ſituation that rendered them ſo abſolutely requiſite.

My father, ſtung to the ſoul, by reproaches and ſuſpicions ſo little merited, afraid leſt this imprudent woman, who had exalted

exalted her voice to a very loud key, ſhould by her violence alarm and terrify his wife, beſought her to ſpare him, at this period, the part of continuing a converſation ſo little ſatisfactory to either, and to be aſſured that when his dear Ann was capable of hearing him upon the ſubject, he would before her enter into an explicit detail of his affairs, and the expences of the three preceding years, which he was perſuaded would prove how little he merited the mortifying reproaches of Mrs. Cranfield. He concluded by giving her the ſum ſhe required, though at that time appropriated for a far better purpoſe,—the diſcharge of a bill that ought long before to have been paid.

My dear father regrets that weakneſs and an imbecility of mind made him the dupe of Mrs. Cranfield's vanity and violence. Had he, at that time, aſſumed reſolution to have perſevered in refuſing the money, and firmly determined on a new regulation in expence, the conſequences could not have

proved ſo fatal to his peace, as expoſing his weak ſide to her, who ſaw, in his fondneſs for my mother, the road to triumph over every prudent or retired plan that reaſon ſuggeſted; but which, if inimical to the wiſhes and pleaſure of his wife, he had not fortitude enough to perſevere in. Thus the tenderneſs of his heart was the original cauſe of his ruin.

I ſhall paſs over the four ſubſequent years. My father acknowledges, that, after one converſation with my mother, on the ſubject of reform, which threw her into hyſterics, he had not the reſolution ever to renew it. Things went from bad to worſe, until he was compelled to ſell ſuch parts of his eſtate as he had the power to diſpoſe of; and, what with annuities, and the loſs to his income, his fortune did not exceed ſix hundred pounds a year. My mother and Mrs. Cranfield, who would not believe his repreſentations, nor ſee the approaching ruin, till it fell upon them, when convinced how long

long and fatally they had deceived themſelves and injured my father, were at firſt clamorous and intemperate in their grief,—cruel and inſulting in their retroſpections; my mother deprecating her own folly, in indulging an *imprudent* paſſion, and her aunt reproaching and lamenting the indiſcretion of her niece, who, "if ſhe pleaſed, might have been a ducheſs, and in poſſeſſion of all her dear Mr. Cranfield's fortune; for it was her fooliſh marriage that had driven him to make a tour into that odious country, where he had picked up his ſtill more odious couſin, and been induced to make a will ſo much to her diſadvantage."

My father wiſely let the torrent roll, and the tumult of their grief and indignation expend its violence, before he attempted to interrupt them; but, when they were exhauſted and ſilent, he aſſumed a degree of firmneſs they had not been accuſtomed to witneſs, and declared his reſolution, in expreſs terms, of making an entire change

in his eſtabliſhment. He had already given notice of diſmiſſion to four ſervants. The coach and one pair of horſes he would reſerve, but the phæton and ſaddle-horſes were to be ſold, the houſe they were in given up, and a ſmaller one, more agreeable to the frugal plan he had decided upon, was to be hired; for even *his* pride revolted againſt any idea of returning to his own manſion in Wales, where he muſt appear with a circumſcribed income.

When he had laid his plans before them, they were ſullenly ſilent. He ſaw their ſurpriſe at his firmneſs was equal to their grief and indignation: he however affected to take their ſilence for acquieſcence, and complimented them on their fortitude and complaiſance. This was going too far: he had touched a tender ſtring; and, from the expreſſion of their eyes foreſeeing another ſtorm, he wiſely withdrew to put his plans in execution, and left them to their mutual condolence.

Mrs.

Mrs. Cranfield, who really doated on her niece, and could not bear that ſhe ſhould be deprived of any indulgencies of dreſs and amuſements, which ſeemed ſo neceſſary to her exiſtence, inſtantly determined to ſacrifice her jointure for the accommodation of the family; and, after an hour's converſation between them, my father was called in, and acquainted with her reſolution. The generoſity of the offer did not reconcile him to the acceptance of it. It was only continuing habits of expence, which, at one time or other, muſt ſuddenly ceaſe, as ſhe had no power to ſecure any part of her income by will after her death. But future conſiderations were diſregarded for preſent gratifications. My mother's tears were again irreſiſtible, and, conditioning only for the reduction of one carriage and two ſervants, things were once more permitted to go on in the accuſtomed way; and, equally againſt inclination and judgment, my father ſubmitted to the all-powerful will of his beloved Ann.

Soon after this period, when I was nearly ſeven years old, and my ſiſter turned of five, you, my deareſt madam, became an inmate of our houſe. You condeſcended to take upon you the important taſk of ſuperintending our education; and from that hour, my revered Mrs. Rowe has been my parent, monitreſs, and guide. To you, next to heaven and my father, I feel myſelf accountable for every action of my life, for every ſentiment of my heart. Still watch over my conduct with the ſcrutinizing eye of a gentle friend, and by your timely admonitions preſerve me *now*, in the hour of danger, from diſgracing you and myſelf.

That unremitting attention, thoſe admirable talents, which you employed to make your pupils reſpectable, virtuous, and accompliſhed, your own conduct, which illuſtrated the precepts you taught, leave us without excuſe if we fall into error; yet the frailty of human nature, the temptations of the

the world, and many unpleaſant circumſtances which I anticipate, render me diffident of myſelf, and more than ever deſirous of your friendly counſel.

But to return.——You ſaw the powerful influence of Mrs. Cranfield, and the aſſuming conſequence ſhe held in the family; and, I am apt to believe, more than ſuſpected ſhe contributed to its ſupport, though you were too delicate to mention the ſubject. You ſaw alſo, that I was unfortunately diſregarded by my mother; and, with a conſideration natural to a generous and humane mind, you ſought to conſole me, by your affectionate attentions, for a neglect that deeply wounded my feelings. Oh! what do I not owe you, my revered friend! Heaven grant that I may never diſgrace you, by ſwerving from thoſe precepts ſo tenderly inculcated in my juvenile years! What pangs did our ſeparation coſt me!—My dear father was my comforter and

companion, and our ſolitary rambles the happieſt hours I was permitted to indulge.

You have heard that Lord Gaywit was enamoured with my ſiſter, and that my delighted mother and aunt eagerly promoted his addreſſes. My father ſtarted two objections.

One, the youth of my ſiſter, juſt turned of ſeventeen, and the impoſſibility of giving her ſuch a fortune as my lord's father would expect, and might naturally be looked for from our ſtile of living,—the firſt objection, was a mere bagatelle, and was over-ruled; but the ſecond occaſioned ſeveral private conferences between my mother and Mrs. Cranfield. Lord Gaywit waited on my father, and declared his love; but at the ſame time confeſſed that Earl Stanton was but too avaricious for his peace, and that he much doubted of his approbation, unleſs the lady brought what, in his eyes, was of more worth than beauty and merit—ſuch a fortune as might induce the earl to make

make him a proper eſtabliſhment. My father frankly confeſſed that ſix thouſand pounds, a moiety of my mother's fortune, was all his daughter could expect, and therefore requeſted his lordſhip to relinquiſh his pretenſions, and conſult the intereſt and honour of his family.

My lord it ſeems was thunderſtruck, but inſtantly repaired to my mother. Mrs. Cranfield was ſummoned to council, and the reſult was a ſpirited application from both ladies to my father, diſplaying the infinite honour and advantages of this propoſed union, and conjuring him to raiſe a few thouſands more on his eſtate, my mother voluntarily offering to diſpoſe of half her jointure for the ſame purpoſe.

They contended, in anſwer to my father's proper conſideration for his ſon, that the intereſt of ſuch a powerful family would doubtleſs procure a place for my brother, much more than equivalent for the

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temporary difficulties he might feel on coming into the poſſeſſion of his eſtate; an event which might naturally be expected to take place at ſuch a diſtant period, that numberleſs advantages might accrue to him within that time; and the growth of timber on the eſtate, in a few years, would enable him to redeem the mortgages.

Thoſe, and an infinite number of other ſpecious but unjuſt arguments were adduced to urge his compliance; but he ſtood his ground firmly, and the conſequence was that Lord Gaywit was requeſted to decline his viſits. My mother and aunt had a fit of ſullenneſs, my ſiſter was taken ill, and the whole houſe thrown into confuſion For a whole week things were in this train. At length my mother's tears, my ſiſter's deſpair, and Mrs. Cranfield's repeated attacks, conquered my dear father's "determined reſolution." Equally againſt his judgment and inclination he has been compelled to yield. How things have been

been managed I know not. He ſaid he was aſhamed to inform me of his weakneſs and injuſtice; and I, knowing what his feelings muſt be, repreſs my own curioſity, to ſpare him and myſelf.

Yeſterday Lord Gaywit renewed his viſits. Smiles and good-humour are ſeen in every countenance. I am too much a cypher to be particularly conſulted, and therefore only gain information from the exultations of my ſiſter, and the parade of preparations already begun to accelerate this important marriage.

And now, my dear madam, I have accounted to you for obſervations and expreſſions in the beginning of my laſt letter, which, perhaps, you might think reprehenſible; but my mind was then agitated, from being informed of my mother's ſucceſs, and my dear father's (ſhall I ſay) weakneſs. No time was loſt to take advantage of his compliance. Letters were diſpatched to Lord Gaywit, and yeſterday he returned in

triumph. My ſentiments on this deſired union are of little conſequence, nor will I truſt them from my boſom. May it be productive of all that happineſs ſo warmly anticipated, and thoſe advantages ſo oſtentatiouſly diſplayed.

We ſhall now be almoſt wholly dependent on Mrs. Cranfield, for I have no doubt that my father has been induced to promiſe largely, and to mortgage all he can. Poor Frederic!—but I muſt be ſilent, and I know my dear Mrs. Rowe is my ſecond ſelf, and that every thing I relate to her is depoſited in a faithful boſom. Adieu, my worthy monitreſs; continue your friendly regards to

Your ever obliged

MARY BOYLE.

LETTER III.

MISS BOYLE TO MRS. ROWE.

ACCEPT my beſt thanks, dear madam, for your kind letter, and be aſſured that I will treaſure up in my heart every ſentiment you have penned, and implicitly follow the excellent advice you have honoured me with. Without reſerve, I ſhall continue my communications as I have opportunities; for even my inſignificant perſon is of ſome uſe now in the general buſtle.

You

You aſk my opinion of Lord Gaywit. It is a delicate point. He is to be my ſiſter's huſband :—I would love and reſpect him, but indeed, my dear Mrs. Rowe, he appears to me to be too much like the idle diſſipated young men of faſhion that we hear of every day. In fact, he has no character. Gay, lively, and frivolous, fond of dreſs, of himſelf, and of beautiful women, his converſation turns upon no other points; and, with an abundance of ſmall talk, I have never heard a good or a wiſe thing eſcape from his lips; yet is he entertaining, and ſo perfectly good-humoured, that you are pleaſed with him, though he cannot contribute to your improvement; nor can he appear to any advantage in the hour of reflection.

It is happy for me, that, early accuſtomed to be overlooked, and of no conſequence in the family, I can bear the triumph of my ſiſter, the tranſports of my mother, and the diſdain of Mrs. Cranfield, with patience and

and indifference. I am careful that not a ſingle look ſhall convey either reproach or regret, at the partial diſtinction made in my ſiſter's favour; nor do I regret on my own account, and I truſt my dear father will live to ſee his ſoon recompenſed for the ſacrifices he has been obliged to make.

To-morrow ſe'nnight is to be the happy day. I have not even heard what fortune my ſiſter is to have, or what ſettlement ſhe has in return. Every one has been ſilent to me, and I diſdain to make any inquiries, as I might do, of the lawyers. Mrs. Cranfield has given her darling Caroline her town houſe, and all the remainder of her jewels. My mother has alſo contributed ſome of her's; and readily relinquiſhed her aunt's houſe in town to her daughter, as ſhe could always be accommodated in his *lordſhip's houſe*, when ſhe choſe to ſpend a month or two there.

Lord

Lord Gaywit very politely this morning entreated me to accompany my ſiſter to town, when ſhe removed from hence; even Caroline joined in the requeſt; but I declined it, with proper acknowledgments. My dear father preſented me with a fifty-pound note for any trifles I might want on the occaſion. I would have declined it, but, fearing my refuſal might have been attributed to caprice or mean reſentment, I accepted, though I ſhall not expend it, as I have a new dreſs by me, never worn, that will anſwer the purpoſe; and have abundant reaſon to think that money will henceforth be a ſcarce commodity in our houſe, and muſt therefore learn to be economical.

We had letters this day from my poor brother. He, unconſcious of the injury his intereſts have ſuſtained, congratulates the family and himſelf on the ſplendid alliance concluded on, and gives a diſtant hint that he ſhould like to be a witneſs of the ceremony; but it will not be attended to, for his

his preſence I believe would diſconcert all parties; as they muſt bluſh at their injuſtice.

My father, when he had peruſed his letter, ſighed deeply, exclaiming "poor boy!" My mother, with a look of reſentment at him, demanded to ſee mine. I gave it to her; I ſaw her ſuſpicion that I had written to him more particulars than ſhe wiſhed him to be informed of; but not for world's would I communicate any intelligence wounding to him and degrading to my parents. Beſides, he is too young to be troubled on ſuch ſubjects: let him then remain in happy ignorance, till the ungrateful truth can no longer be concealed. Yet I ſhall think it a neceſſary duty to inculcate prudence and economy, that he may not indulge in expences beyond the line of his future very moderate income. The dear boy has always been ſo much attached to me, that every wiſh of mine has met with a ready compliance, and on that I build my hopes of

gradually

gradually leading him into an economical plan, that may tend to leſſen his diſappointment hereafter.

Alas! my dear Mrs. Rowe, my father ſhuns all private converſation with me. His eye drops under mine, and he ſeduloufly avoids being alone with me. Shut up in his library, our delightful evening walks are no more! and I wander like a ſolitary being, unheeded and unregarded.—This life I cannot ſupport. The affection of a revered parent was the whole ſum of my happineſs; the circumſcribed line of my pleaſures was confined to the tender regards of a beloved father, and the friendſhip of my eſteemed monitreſs; neither of which can I bear to loſe. I muſt ſeek him, I muſt force myſelf into his preſence, be the conſequence what it may.

I have ſeen him! yes, I have beheld the beſt of parents in an agony of ſorrow, confuſion, and ſelf-reproach! Let me throw a veil

a veil over a ſcene not to be deſcribed.—Good God! what have I not ſuffered?—Thoſe virtues, that angelic diſpoſition! that tenderneſs for a darling wife! which is interwoven with his exiſtence, have all been made ſubſervient to the ſelfiſh plans of others,—to the deſpicable ambition of Mrs. Cranfield. Her abſurd vanity was diſappointed in the marriage of my mother, and now an opportunity had offered to aggrandize one of the family, to the empty ſplendor of a title, ſhe readily ſacrifices all the intereſts of the others, and has triumphed over a heart and mind formed to the nobleſt principles of reaſon and virtue, had that mind met with kindred ſouls.——*That* woman has been the bane of our happineſs But for her my mother would have been every thing that is good and reſpectable.

My heart is full: I muſt break off.—Perhaps you will not hear from me again, until

until the wedding is over. Adieu, dear madam: believe me ever

Your obliged

MARY BOYLE.

LETTER IV.

LORD GAYWIT TO BEVIL GARDNER, ESQ.

YOU may congratulate, or you may laugh, at me, I care not which. I have made up my mind, and the loveliest girl in the creation will be my wife within eight days.

The

The Earl wanted to ſee me ſhackled, but the chains were to be of his own chooſing. No, I thank him; he would have ſelected heavy fetters, though well gilded, to cheat the poor devil into matrimony with a fiend. I flew off:—the old Don was angry, and I took a trip into Hertfordſhire, where I accidentally met with an angel. The die was caſt:—I was over head and ears in love, and found no difficulties to impede my endeavours to obtain her notice; but, when things came to a point, there was a demur about the caſh, and the father civilly forbid my viſits. I was more than half mad. I knew my wife parent would not conſent without ſomething towards houſekeeping on the lady's ſide; and, though I loved her paſſionately, I could not "ſtarve upon the features of a wife;" therefore I took my leave, and for a week was the dulleſt fellow alive, and half inclined to hang myſelf upon the firſt friendly willow that preſented; but, in the hour of deſpair, the black clouds diſperſed, the ſun broke through

through the miſt, and a few lines from an *old woman* threw me into ſuch tranſports, that I believe my fellows thought me fit for Bedlam. In ſhort, a grand aunt of my beloved's ſent me ſuch propoſals as I gladly acceded to; and, after ſome objections on the Earl's part, and many ſupplications on mine, his great deſire to have a grandſon prevailed over avarice, and he conſented to abate of ſome thouſands to gratify his favourite wiſh, and make me a "ſober married man."

Thus, all things being in train, I flew to my charmer, and was received with rapture by all but the father and ſiſter. The former was polite, but grave and cold; the other treated me with the moſt perfect good breeding; but, whether from envy at her ſiſter's good fortune, — from a native pride, or a conſtitutional coldneſs, ſhe does not appear ſo ſenſible of the honour in being allied to an *Earl*, as the the other females of the family, who are

for

for ever talking of him, and making an idol of *my lordſhip*. The mother of my beloved has been beautiful, is ſtill handſome; but the confounded old aunt is quite a bore, ſo fond of me and her niece, that it would be deviliſh tireſome, were it not for a few politic conſiderations from the hints ſhe has thrown out of her riches, which, I have no doubt, will center in my wife; for Mary, why I know not, ſeems to be of no conſideration in the family.

A propos of ſiſter Mary. She is the very girl for you, Bevil; extremely agreeable, genteel, and intereſting. Her figure is petite, but light and animated; her countenance, ſweet, expreſſive, and ſentimental. I believe ſhe has much good ſenſe, and, they tell me, learned. Were ſhe handſomer — ſhe is too grave for me, but, for a fellow who chops logic, and utters wiſe ſentences, ſhe is the very thing; ſo come and offer your ſervices to

ſiſter Mary, whilſt I engage the divine Caroline.

If you will not, why I have given you ſufficient employment to run the town over, and whiſper every ſoul of faſhion, that Gaywit, the laughing, inſenſible Gaywit, is enſlaved by a pair of the loveliеſt eyes in the univerſe, and will ſoon be a Benedict!

Comfort the poor girls for my defection, and believe me as much your's as my own, and no compliment neither.

GAYWIT.

LETTER

LETTER V.

MISS BOYLE TO MRS. ROWE.

YOU are doubtleſs ſurpriſed at my ſilence. Alas! my good friend, our houſe has been ſtrangely diſcompoſed—overwhelmed, I may ſay, with trouble and confuſion, by an event, however to be expected, yet the time and manner of it, ſhocking, awful, and impreſſive. If I can quiet the perturbation of my ſpirits, and obtain ſteady fingers, I will endeavour to be methodical, and lead you gradually on to the circumſtances alluded to.

In my laſt letter I told you the day was fixed for my ſiſter's marriage, and great were the preparations to celebrate a union ſo earneſtly deſired by my mother and aunt.—Whether exceſs of joy, much fatigue, or a conſtitutional weakneſs, affected Mrs. Cranfield beyond her ſtrength, I know not; but, five days previous to the ceremony, while ſhe was dreſſing for dinner, ſhe was ſuddenly taken ill, and dropped in a fit, before her woman had time to call for aſſiſtance. The violent ringing of the bell, and a ſhriek, were heard at the ſame time. My mother flew from her dreſſing-room, my father and myſelf from the library, breathleſs with terror. Caroline was in the garden with his lordſhip. Dreadful as the ſituation of Mrs. Cranfield appeared, yet ſo ſhocking were my apprehenſions, that, ſeeing my mother ſafe, rendered me, I am aſhamed to ſay, for a moment inſenſible to the alarming ſtate that ſhe laid in.

But

But the tears and exclamations of my mother recalled my conſideration to the object before me, and I endeavoured to aſſiſt in reſtoring her to life. A phyſician was ſent for, but, before his arrival, by various applications, we ſucceeded, and the blood once more returned through its natural channels, and ſigns of life were perceptible. She recovered her ſenſes much ſooner than could have been expected, and ſtrove to account for this "fainting fit," from her having gone out in the garden before breakfaſt.—This was univerſally believed, nor did the phyſician contradict it, but the houſekeeper aſſured me afterwards that it was an apoplectic fit. The event has proved ſhe was right.

All that day ſhe continued much indiſpoſed with the ſhock. My father and mother ſaid little, but their looks ſpoke the anguiſh of their hearts, and I tranſlated them but too truly. The next morning, however, ſhe was aſtoniſhingly recovered, and

joy was viſible in every face. She continued to mend, and the following day was ſo perfectly well, that the alarming accident ſeemed to fade from every one's memory but mine. I judged her life was now held by a very frail tenure, and that poſſibly a ſecond attack would prove fatal.

My apprehenſions I could not ſubdue, but I endeavoured to conceal them, and the day at length arrived which was to accompliſh the grand wiſh of Mrs. Cranfield's heart; and ſee her darling niece a lady.

I cannot enter into any deſcription of the ceremony, of dreſſes, or of the ſuperb entertainment. Every thing was conducted in a ſtile of elegance and ſplendor. Mrs. Cranfield and my mother were little leſs delighted than the bride. My lord preſented me with a pair of the moſt beautiful bracelets I ever ſaw, and in ſuch terms of kindneſs, that I was (reluctantly I own) compelled to accept of them. The day paſſed

paſſed winged with delight to all parties, and we retired at an early hour.

Before five in the morning, I was awakened by a ſervant, requeſting I would come to Mrs. Cranfield's apartment immediately. I threw on my morning-gown, and followed in a moment. My mother was already there, dreadfully agitated. The poor lady laid lifeleſs to all appearance, though a ſmall fluttering pulſe proved ſhe ſtill exiſted.

Her woman, who ſlept in a ſmall adjoining room, waked about four o'clock, and thought ſhe heard ſome faint groans proceeding from her lady's room. She entered the apartment, and ſaw her ſtruggling in the agonies of death. She had prudence enough not to alarm the family precipitately, but ſoon procured help, and the preſence of my mother. A phyſician was ſent for; but, before his arrival, the heart had ceaſed to vibrate, and the fluttering pulſe was

ſtopped for ever. He allowed that it was a ſecond attack of an apoplexy which had proved fatal, haſtened, I have little doubt, by the extreme agitation of her ſpirits, and that fulneſs of joy, oftentimes more fatal than the oppreſſion of ſorrow.

I was deeply affected by the ſituation of my mother; her grief was exceſſive. The tender affection which the deceaſed certainly had for her, claimed the grateful and affectionate regret ſhe painfully felt. I endeavoured to ſooth, but I could not blame her emotions. I attended her to my father's apartment, and left her to receive conſolation from him.

During all the buſtle occaſioned by this melancholy event, Lord and Lady Gaywit remained undiſturbed; fortunately their apartment laid at the other end of the gallery, pretty diſtant from Mrs. Cranfield's, and they were unconſcious of what happened. When I returned to my room, I dreſt myſelf

myſelf, for it was in vain to think of ſleep; and the morning being fine, I deſcended to the garden, oppreſſed with a crowd of melancholy ideas, and trembling for the ſituation of my dear father.

Alas! my friend, think what muſt become of us!—how circumſcribed our income! In loſing Mrs. Cranfield, we loſe the eight hundred a year ſhe contributed to the general ſtock. Her private fortune cannot be much; for, keeping a town-houſe, two ſervants there, and the expences of clothes and public amuſements, when in town, for herſelf, my mother, and ſiſter, can have amounted to no ſmall ſum. Every thing but what ſhe has reſerved from her jointure now falls to Mr Philip Cranfield and his family, conſequently, from the hour of her death, all our dependence on her income ceaſes.

When the family aſſembled to breakfaſt, my mother was not preſent. She had,

however, previouſly communicated the late melancholy event to Lord and Lady Gaywit. It was a ſad interruption to the general joy of the preceding day. My ſiſter breakfaſted with my mother in her dreſſing-room; my lord joined us. He could not be expected to feel much concern for a perſon ſo little known to him, but it made a derangement in his plans; for they were to have quitted us for London next week, a well-furniſhed houſe ready to receive them;—that houſe was no longer at his command. I thought he looked diſconcerted, and it was natural enough.—My father ſcarcely ſpoke, avoided my eyes, and with difficulty ſwallowed a cup of coffee. I ſaw what paſſed in *his* heart, and *mine* bled for his diſtreſs.

When breakfaſt was ended, I left the gentlemen together, and repaired, though uninvited, to my mother's dreſſing-room.—I found her in tears, and with all the marks of exceſſive grief; my ſiſter looked vexed and agitated. I paid my compliments to her;

her; ſhe received them coldly: I allowed for her ſituation. I addreſſed my mother; ſhe anſwered me in an accent of grief and tenderneſs that touched me to the ſoul: I had *not been accuſtomed* to it. I could not command my tears. "Well may you weep, (ſaid ſhe,) for we are utterly ruined!"

"Yet, dreadful as this event is, (returned Lady Gaywit,) it is fortunate that it did not take place a *month ago*."

I believe my eyes looked reproach; my mother's certainly did. The ſelfiſh obſervation ſeemed to ſtrike her. "For *you*, Caroline, it was fortunate; but others of your family may have cauſe to think different."

I never ſaw my mother look ſo diſpleaſed with my ſiſter as at that moment.

She felt it, and roſe up. "I muſt go to my lord; we muſt now think of providing ourſelves with another town-houſe.—But, dear madam, (cried ſhe, ſuddenly

collecting herſelf,) my aunt has no doubt made a will?"

"She did (anſwered my mother, with a deep ſigh) ſome years ago: I have a copy in my cabinet."

"O pray then produce it. There may be ſome neceſſary orders to be obſerved."

My mother attempted to riſe from the ſofa, but, burſting into tears, ſhe again ſunk back; and, giving me the keys, directed me to the drawer where the papers were ſealed up, endorſed as the laſt will of Mrs. Mary Cranfield, and directed to my mother. She broke the ſeal with a trembling hand: my ſiſter looked all impatience. The contents were ſoon read: "She gave every thing ſhe ſhould die poſſeſſed of for the entire uſe, and in the abſolute diſpoſal, of my mother."

Lady Gaywit looked ſurpriſed and diſpleaſed for a moment, but, quickly recovering, ſaid, "Oh! no doubt ſhe muſt have ſaved ſome thouſands."

"I

"I believe you are miſtaken, (replied my mother.) She never ſaved much from her income, and *you* know ſhe has lately expended à good deal of money. I even doubt if ſhe has left *one* thouſand pounds."

My father knocked at the door; and, on his entrance, after a ſlight compliment, my ſiſter withdrew. I roſe to follow her. — "Stay, Mary, (ſaid my father,) you only now are concerned in our future proſpects."

Seeing my mother in an agony, I turned to comfort her. "Dear ſir, (cried I,) do not enter upon any diſtreſſing ſubjects now." Tears ſprung to his eyes; he took my mother's hand, and I haſtily withdrew.

What an unpromiſing beginning to a marriage ſo earneſtly deſired! How quick the tranſitions in this life from joy to ſorrow!— An expreſs was that day ſent to Mr. Philip Cranfield. Lord Gaywit wrote to his father, and I perceived from ſeveral hints

hints that he was deſirous of quitting the houſe of mourning; nor could I blame him: the general gloom that overſpread the houſe accorded not with his feelings, nor the tranſports with which he viewed his lovely wife. Decency, however, required they ſhould not leave my mother, whoſe grief that night brought on fainting-fits, and an alarming illneſs, which for three days terrified her exceedingly. Yeſterday the fever abated: the turbulence of ſorrow gave way to ſilent dejection, and, thank heaven! ſhe is now out of danger.

You know the ſenſibilities of your little friend, and can ſuppoſe I have not been an indifferent perſon all this time. It is true, the very little attention I have ever experienced from Mrs. Cranfield could not give her any great ſhare of my affection; nor could I feel, or affect to feel, any poignancy of ſorrow for her death.—But it is an awful hour,— an impreſſive leſſon upon a thinking mind, when we ſee perſons ſnatched

ſo

ſo ſuddenly from this world, to make up their great account in the world to come. How ſeldom are the beſt of us prepared for ſuch a momentous event!—But the death of Mrs. Cranfield muſt be attended by ſo many diſtreſſing circumſtances to my parents, that my mind is torn with inexpreſſible anguiſh to think of *their ſufferings*, and, what is ſtill more grievous, *ſelf-upbraidings*.

Ah! if Caroline has a heart—what muſt ſhe not feel! but *ſelf*, that predominant paſſion in her, of *ſelf* intereſt, has ſwallowed up every juſt and tender conſideration; and her woman has been deputed to aſſiſt in taking inventories, and making the moſt minute inquiries relative to the effects of Mrs. Cranfield, even when my mother was in moſt danger. Good God! what apathy, what ſelfiſhneſs! I have left my mother, for a few hours, to get a little reſt, but I cannot ſleep; and, ſenſible how uneaſy you muſt feel at my ſilence, I have written

written thus far to account for it.—One more look upon my ſorrowing parent, and I will return to diſpatch this with, I hope, a more cheerful ſpirit.

My dear, my reverend, friend, my heart is burſting! To communicate may relieve me, and in your faithful breaſt I depoſit all my ſorrows.

When I entered my mother's apartment, the motion of the ſervant informed me that ſhe ſlept. I ſeated myſelf by the ſide of the bed. Her hand hung over the clothes; I took it gently in one of mine: it was burning hot. She ſtarted frequently, and ſoon waked, drawing her hand from mine. "Is that my dear Caroline?" aſked ſhe feebly, without turning.

"No, my dear mother; it is your Mary."

She then turned her head with quickneſs. "Poor Mary!—It is you, indeed!—You muſt

muſt comfort your father:—he is undone, *my child!*"

"My child!" in a tone of tenderneſs, was more than I could bear. I dropped on my knees, kiſſing her hand, and watering it with my tears. "Riſe, dear Mary; I am very ſick; help me, my dear girl."

She was indeed violently affected. The phyſician juſt then made his appearance.—I ſaw by his countenance that my mother was not ſo well as yeſterday. He ſpoke to her, and, after a few queſtions, drawing me to the window, as the ſervant was aſſiſting her, — "Has Mrs. Boyle ever had the ſmall-pox?" demanded he. The queſtion made me ſhudder, for I knew it had always been a matter of doubt; and, when my ſiſter and I were inoculated for that diſorder, lodgings had been taken for us.

When I mentioned this, "Depend upon it, (ſaid he,) ſhe has every ſymptom of that diſtemper. I ſhall be glad to be miſtaken, for

for the agitation of her mind is by no means favourable."

My father came in that moment. I could not ſpeak. He advanced to the bed. My mother complained of heat, ſickneſs, and thirſt. He was extremely agitated.—The doctor ſpoke lightly of her complaint, and ſoon after retired with my father. She dropped into a doze for about half an hour, and then waked delirious. I was dreadfully alarmed. The phyſician had not left the houſe: he came again to her apartment. She talked ſtrange and rambling.—He examined her pretty cloſely, and, as he left the room, ſaid to me, "I am confirmed in my judgment, the ſmall-pox are appearing."

It was like the ſentence of death to me, and I entreated him to prepare my father and ſiſter. He nodded aſſent, and left me overwhelmed with grief and anxiety. Soon after my mother grew more compoſed,

ſunk

ſunk again into a doze, and I ſtole off to give ſome vent to my anguiſh by writing to you.

Adieu, my beloved friend. Pray for the returning health of my dear parent, and the peace of your

Diſtreſſed

MARY BOYLE.

LETTER VI.

LORD GAYWIT TO BEVIL GARDNER, ESQ.

I Received your congratulatory epiſtle this morning, and thank you heartily, dear Bevil, for your friendly wiſhes. You are offended that the information of my marriage

marriage comes through the channel of a public newſpaper; but, faith! I have had no inclination or time to write. My joys have been ſuddenly interrupted,—a kind of tragic drama overclouds the hymeneal torch, and the ſmiling God of Love is ſuperceded by the grim tyrant Death.

To drop metaphor, the very night of our marriage, an aunt of my beloved's took her departure very quietly to the land of ſpirits, to the great conſternation of the family, particularly to our mother, Mrs. Boyle, who has been ill ever ſince, and the phyſician pronounced this morning that ſhe is in danger of having the ſmall-pox. As I have an utter averſion to the houſe of mourning, and a ſtill greater to the ſmall-pox, I would have ſet off poſt this very day for town, but, plague on it! I have now no houſe to take up my quarters in; for, moſt unluckily, the houſe, which the deceaſed had given up for our accommodation, is loſt to us, and goes with her jointure

jointure to a hundred and fortieth couſin. This is a deviliſh drawback, but I cannot ſtay here, therefore requeſt you will get me a ſmall furniſhed houſe, fit for my angel-wife, till we can look about us. The old aunt has left all her fortune to our mother, which is, in fact, holding it in truſt for us, as my divine Caroline aſſures me we ſhall have every ſixpence of it. When you ſee my wife, you will adore her. I expect that half my acquaintance will "covet their neighbour's wife," and all the women will expire with envy. Loſe no time in procuring me a reſidence, and ſend me the earlieſt notice. Adieu, dear Bevil.

Thy ſincere and happy friend,

GAYWIT.

LETTER

LETTER VII.

MISS BOYLE TO MRS. ROWE.

NEVER did the ſoothing conſolations of a friendly heart come more opportunely than your's, which I received yeſterday.—Hope, my dear Mrs. Rowe, is fled for ever!—My poor ſuffering mother cannot live;— I am ſure ſhe cannot. The doctor has not pronounced her doom, but I ſee it in *his looks*, and in every ſymptom of the diſorder. Alas! her face, once ſo beautiful, is now entirely deformed by that horrid diſtemper;— her ſenſes deranged, her eyes cloſed, a heavy oppreſſion at her breaſt;

—all

—all, all confirm to me the dreadful certainty that, in a few ſhort days, ſhe will be no more!

Great God! ſupport my dear father in this hour of trial! His ſufferings admit of no conſolation: he adored his wife, and now, when other troubles bear hard upon him, to loſe her will be the climax of miſery. My heart is heavily loaded with ſorrow —I have your prayers, I know:—I can write no more.

It is now ſix days ſince I began this letter, and this is the firſt hour I could compoſe myſelf to write.—— All is over!— and I hope my dear mother is enjoying everlaſting felicity in the bleſſed regions above.—When I broke off ſo abruptly, I was writing in her apartment, whilſt ſhe enjoyed a temporary ſleep. She awoke more oppreſſed, and breathed with increaſed difficulty; the ſwellings had greatly ſubſided, and her face looked a ghaſtly pale. Terrified at a change

ſo

ſo ſudden, I ſent with all haſte for the phyſician; I ſaw the nurſe was equally alarmed. He came, and confirmed all our apprehenſions. That night ſhe expired without appearing to know any of us. Oh! my dear Mrs. Rowe, never ſhall I forget that dreadful night; yet what were my ſufferings compared to my father's! Heaven ſupported him: — he lives, a proof that grief cannot always kill, nor ſorrow burſt the heart-ſtrings.—Never did man ſuffer more than he does, but he evidently ſtruggles to ſubmit with reſignation to the divine decrees, and to exiſt for "my ſake,"— ſo he tells me; and I bear all with fortitude aſtoniſhing to myſelf, that I may ſupport the declining days of a beloved and revered parent.

During this dreadful interval of ſix days, Mrs. Cranfield's remains have been depoſited in the ſilent tomb, and we have received notice that Mr. Cranfield, whoſe father has been dead ſome years, is on his way

to London. With *him* we have nothing to do, and therefore I hope we ſhall be ſpared unneceſſary viſits

My ſiſter has really been greatly affected. She has loſt a moſt tender parent, and doubtleſs ſuch very melancholy events, treading ſo cloſely on the heels of joy, muſt deeply wound her feelings. My lord too ſeems much concerned, and will gladly, I believe, leave this houſe of ſorrow.——Again I break off: I muſt attend my dear unhappy father. Indeed, my dear Mrs. Rowe, your little friend is no ſtoic. Alas! ſhe feels moſt acutely.

What a converſation have I had!— what agonies have wrung the heart of my father! I have,—I hope I have, aſſiſted his reaſon, and ſuggeſted a plan that will hold out future comfort. — It is briefly this;—to turn all our effects, that he has the power to diſpoſe of, into money, pay our debts, and let the reſidue, be it what it may, go towards the produce of the eſtate, for

redeeming the mortgages. My father will give up all his property, into the hands of truſtees, for the benefit of my brother, and we ſhall retire into ſome cheap country, where the intereſt of the moiety of my mother's fortune (ſix thouſand pounds) will ſupport us in eaſe and affluence.

I will not repeat the painful retroſpections we were obliged to go over, nor the diſtreſſing emotions they occaſioned to both, when the late adopted plans came to be inveſtigated. — Sacred is the confidence repoſed in me, and may all paſt tranſactions be buried in oblivion!

I deſired my father to acquaint Lady Gaywit with the reſult of our converſation; and, as our plans can no ways militate againſt her intereſt, and will be the means of keeping connections at a diſtance from her, whoſe circumſcribed income could reflect no honour on her elevated rank, nor add one moment's pleaſure to her expected happineſs in the gay world; I have no doubt

doubt of her ready concurrence in the propriety of them.

I alſo entreated him to make no painful obſervations, no diſtreſſing remarks on paſt circumſtances, which could not be recalled; nor, by expreſſing any regrets on *my* account, leſſen the affection of a ſiſter, whoſe regards would be ever dear to me, from a conviction that her indifference, on moſt occaſions, was more owing to conſtitutional coldneſs than a deſigned neglect. And I am perſuaded I judge truly; for you have often remarked that Caroline had not a feeling heart, and, happily for her, could ſhake off ſorrow before it reached the boſom, and enjoy pleaſure even by anticipation: our retirement therefore will not affect *her*. The gay world will abundantly compenſate for the abſence of dull relations, without ſplendor or titles; and, if we part on good terms, and hold a correſpondence, much good may reſult to us both, by a mixture of the grave and the gay.

My beloved father acquieſced with my wiſhes; and, embracing me with ſtreaming eyes, exclaimed, "Never ſhall I forgive my weakneſs and infatuation, in purſuing for years a ſyſtem of expence which reaſon told me muſt eventually ruin the intereſts of you and poor Frederic. Wherever I go, reproach and unavailing regrets muſt follow, and embitter my future days." I could make no reply at that moment, but haſtened from him, ſending a meſſage to my ſiſter.—She is now with my father, and I have ſeized the opportunity of writing thus far.

Write to me, my beloved friend, my monitreſs, and future guide. Every action of my life, every ſentiment of my heart, ſhall be conſtantly laid before you; and, as *you* approve or blame, I ſhall ſtand acquitted or condemned in *my own* opinion, for on you judgment I can rely. Teach *me* patience and fortitude, and the happy art of communicating both to my deeply-afflicted father.

Heaven

Heaven bleſs and preſerve you! prays your

Obliged and affectionate

MARY BOYLE.

LETTER VIII.

LORD GAYWIT TO BEVIL GARDNER, ESQ.

UPON my ſoul, Bevil! I am devoured with the ſpleen, enveloped in clouds of melancholy; and, were I inclined to ſuperſtition, ſhould be apt to conclude that the inauſpicious events of the laſt fortnight were full fraught with diſmal prognoſtics of ſad interruptions to my expected happineſs.

In plain words, Mrs. Boyle, the mother of my angelic wife, has followed her aunt to the boſom of the earth, and was laſt night reſigned to the embraces of the tomb.

My charming Caroline has ſuffered much, for ſhe was fond of her mother, and claimed all my tender attentions to ſooth and conſole her. Thank heaven! ſhe is this morning more compoſed and tranquil, and therefore I can ſpare an hour to thank you for the trouble you have kindly taken, and to approve very much of the houſe and ſituation. A few days more I ſhall be detained; I hope not exceeding four or five, and then haſten to quit this abode of ſorrow. Mr. Boyle and his daughter talk of retiring to Wales or Scotland for ſome months. I invited them to town, but they peremptorily, though politely, declined it.

Mrs. Cranfield left her fortune to Mrs. Boyle. *She* has died without a will, which was plaguy unlucky, becauſe now the property

property muſt be divided between three, which otherwiſe would have been all mine; not that *I* am mercenary, or care about the traſh; but the Earl is not ſo abſtracted. He was taught to expect Mrs. Cranfield's fortune would be the ſole property of my wife, and, as the old lady was ſuppoſed to be rich, it was no ſmall inducement with him to conſent to our marriage. his pride revolting againſt a private untitled family. How *he* will bear the diſappointment I know not; and, as he cannot retract the ſettlements, I *care not*.—In my lovely Caroline I have the wealth of a Nabob. Tomorrow the amount of our aunt's property will be known, and, when that is ſettled, I ſhall ſpeed to town.

So you have no inclination to matrimony, and our agreeable and good ſiſter Mary has no attractions for you.—Upon my honour, Bevil, ſhe is an amiable creature, and I ſhould rejoice to ſee her happily ſettled, but I will not turn match-maker,

nor would there be hopes for you at present. The melancholy situation of her father engrosses all her cares and attentions, and she is fixed to retire with him into the country, where she may vegetate "unknowing and unknown." Remember me to all our friends. In a few days I shall assure you in person how sincerely I am

Your friend,

GAYWIT.

Plant icicles round your heart, to defend it from the fascination of my wife's charms.

LETTER

LETTER IX.

MISS BOYLE TO MRS. ROWE.

AGAIN I reſume my pen. It is now a week ſince I wrote to you;—a ſad and buſy week it has been. Your letter, my good friend, proved a cordial to my ſpirits, and enabled me to go through ſcenes moſt truly painful. In this melancholy interval, the *body* of my dear mother has been conſigned to the cold grave; the *ſoul* I humbly truſt rejoices in a bleſſed immortality. When a dear friend dies, it is the ſurvivor is the ſufferer; the ſelfiſh heart is not abſtracted enough to reſiſt ſorrow

for its loſs, though ſure that loſs muſt be eternal gain to the friend we lament.

Alas! my dear mother is releaſed from many unavoidable troubles ſhe was ill calculated to bear. Surely, in the decline of life, to be deprived of elegancies, of comforts, long habitude has rendered neceſſary to her exiſtence, would have been a diſtreſſing ſituation no one that loved her could have wiſhed her to experience: who then ſhall repine at the gracious diſpenſations of Providence? *I* do not; I will rejoice in her beatitude, and ſuffer the evils I may have to encounter with humble reſignation and patience.

I thank heaven, my father, though oppreſſed with melancholy, is more tranquil, more reſigned to the paſt, and the future; yet his ſufferings have been great;—for, on an inveſtigation into Mrs. Cranfield's property, it does not appear that the whole ſhe had the power to beſtow will exceed twelve hundred pounds, a mere trifle when divided,

divided. I am ſorry to ſay my ſiſter behaved outrageouſly on her diſappointment: her reflections were cruel and indecent to the memory of the deceaſed, whoſe accounts proved that ſhe had expended near a thouſand pounds in preſents for her nuptials, of jewels and clothes; beſides giving her the chief part of her own trinkets; therefore certainly ſhe had no right to complain.

There has been a degree of cunning in Caroline's conduct that hurts me. The jewels, &c. purchaſed with this thouſand pounds, have been carefully concealed, and unacknowledged to my father or myſelf; nor ſhould we have known it, but from the examination of her papers. My father gave her a look of reproach, but ſaid nothing: I ſpoke not a word. To do my lord juſtice, he has behaved infinitely better than my ſiſter, though with more right to complain, as I find he has been deceived.

What a ſtriking leſſon do the late events in our family hold out to the ambitious and contriving heart! Poor Mrs. Cranfield, whoſe wiſhes through life was to ſee herſelf allied to nobility, and her beautiful niece become the wife of a peer; on the very day that the ſo-much-deſired alliance took place, became a lifeleſs coarſe, and all her ſplendid expectations cut off by the grim tyrant, in the very hour of exultation. May the diſappointment reſt with her, and not extend further!

We have been ſo expeditious, that all our affairs are in a train to be ſettled. Truſtees have been appointed for the eſtate and my brother's expences. He is to be placed with an eminent barriſter, (his own choice,) where he will attain the knowledge of a profeſſion that may be uſeful to him; and if, hereafter, he wants not its emoluments, it may at leaſt aſſiſt him in the management of his eſtate.

Lord

Lord and Lady Gaywit took leave of us yeſterday. The latter, a little aſhamed of her late behaviour, requeſted to *hear* from me, which I very readily promiſed. Within a fortnight, we ſhall quit England; that is, my father and myſelf. We purpoſe going through Scotland, and, wherever we find a place congenial to our wiſhes, we ſhall fix our reſidence. Our dear Frederic is expected to-morrow: my father will ſee him advantageouſly ſettled before our departure.—I feel for him; he is old enough to be hurt at the ſurpriſing change in our circumſtances. For my part, the tranſactions of the laſt month appear like a fearful dream to me ſometimes, and I can ſcarce credit that "ſuch things are;" but the ſight of my dear father's pallid face and ſable habit too ſurely evinces the dreadful reality, and overwhelms me with ſorrow not leſs poignant becauſe I endeavour to diſguiſe it, that I may not more deeply wound my ſuffering parent.—I am ſummoned to the parlour;

parlour; Mr. Cranfield is there. — We could have ſpared this viſit.

I retract my words, dear madam, I am charmed with Mr. Cranfield. What think you was the purport of his viſit? (in conſequence I muſt believe of a minute enquiry into our circumſtances.) "He intreated pardon for an intruſion perhaps unwarrantable; but, having always underſtood he had *accidentally* ſtepped in between the *juſt* pretenſions of the late Mrs. Cranfield and her niece, he had unwillingly poſſeſſed himſelf of a fortune he had no claims to; but he was not at liberty, conſiſtent with the duty he owed to a numerous family, to reject that good which Providence had ſo unexpectedly diſpenſed to him. He was the more reconciled, as he heard Mr. Boyle was poſſeſſed of a large fortune, and his lady of a handſome one. In the courſe of ſeventeen years, many revolutions had taken place in his family. His parents were no more; his ſiſters happily married; his

brother

brother well ſettled, and himſelf a bachelor, his eſtate improving, and money every day accumulating, as he was no expenſive man. The jointure, fallen in to him by Mrs. Cranfield's death, he did not want; he came therefore to requeſt my father would do him the inexpreſſible pleaſure of accepting the regular remittance of that eight hundred a year he had been accuſtomed to draw for in his aunt's life-time, and he would enſure the payment of it for Mr. Boyle's life, and to Miſs Boyle, as long as ſhe ſhould remain unmarried."

Here was nobleneſs of heart and unexampled generoſity!—We were both ſpeechleſs: he ſaw our emotions. "Pardon me, ſir, (continued he,) for enforcing my requeſt. You will inexpreſſibly oblige me by condeſcending to grant it."

My father could no longer repreſs his feelings; (tears had already begun to ſtray down my cheeks.) "Nobleſt of men! ſaid

ſaid he, greatly agitated,) I admire, I eſteem you, beyond expreſſion! and, ſhould I ever want for myſelf, or that good girl, any pecuniary aid, you ſhall find how I honour you, by an immediate application for your aſſiſtance; but now, ſir, we have enough for all our wants. We are going to travel; the income we poſſeſs is ſufficient for our purpoſe. Suffer us to enjoy peace and independence;—a ſenſe of obligation would entirely deſtroy our plan of comfort. We wiſh to obtain a tranquil kind of life, incompatible with a conſciouſneſs of obligation and dependence. I have long been a ſtranger to peace; I am now going in purſuit of it. Permit me, therefore, to decline peremptorily your uncommonly generous offer. — I again repeat, ſhould I ever want your aſſiſtance, I will freely require it; and to no other man living will I owe obligations of a pecuniary nature."

"If

"If you do *me* juſtice, (ſaid Mr. Cranfield,) you would eſteem *me* as the obliged perſon, by your acceptance of what I conſider your right; for I have no doubt but that every ſhilling I poſſeſs would have been your property, had not the late Mr. Cranfield met with me; *you* will therefore confer the favour, and I ſhall ſtill feel myſelf largely your debtor;—but, if you refuſe to oblige me, Miſs Boyle, I hope, will have the goodneſs to reconcile me to myſelf by an acceptance."

"Pardon me for interrupting you, (I replied;) *my* ſentiments do ſo exactly accord with my father's, that I intreat you, ſir, to drop your generous purpoſe, and accept from us the moſt grateful ſenſiblity of your goodneſs. You came here, I am ſure, to communicate pleaſure; ceaſe then to oppreſs us with your kindneſs, and let me welcome you as an old friend of our family: in that light, but in no other, can you give or receive pleaſure."

He

He roſe from his chair, and walked about much agitated: we were ſilent. He reſumed his ſeat.— "It muſt be as you pleaſe.— You afflict, you diſappointment, me; but remember, in all emergencies, *I* am your banker: draw for what ſums you pleaſe, I will be anſwerable.——You talk of travelling; may I aſk your route?"

"To Scotland, ſir," replied my father.

He muſed a little.— "Your ſecond daughter is, I hear, married to a nobleman; but your ſon, where is he;—Pardon my freedom; I am an "old friend," you know."

My father frankly explained to him the ſituation in which he had placed my brother, and his future views for him. The other heard him with attention, and warmly approved of his conduct. We then entered into a more general converſation.— He was aſked to ſtay dinner, to which he readily aſſented, and I left them preparing for a walk in the gardens.

Tell

Tell me, my dear friend, if you are not charmed with this noble-minded generous man? He is very little on the wrong ſide of forty; a good height, an open manly countenance, — a penetrating eye, that meets your's with a friendly confidence, and a heart, I am ſure, fraught with every virtue that can dignify human nature.——— But, if I ſay much more, you will ſuſpect that *I* have *no* heart; and, to ſay truth, I believe I like Mr. Cranfield better than any man, except my father;—that is, I eſteem and revere him: with any other affection I am unacquainted; and, as there is not more than two or three years between the age of him and my father, conſequently I may be allowed to profeſs reſpect and admiration.

Mr. Cranfield paſſed the night here, and left us this morning. I think we parted with a reciprocity of eſteem, that will only terminate with our lives. We have promiſed to correſpond with him, and to make

him

him our agent upon all occaſions. "As a proof that you mean me fairly, (ſaid he,) that you wiſh for my friendſhip, accept this pocket-book, or you caſt me off for ever."

I heſitated, and retreated. "Mary, (ſaid my father,) refuſe not the pledge of friendſhip.—I hope, ſir, you do not abuſe my confidence."

"No, on my honour, (anſwered the other,) I will not wound your delicacy.—This trifle is entirely the *teſt* and *cement* of a friendly regard I preſume to ſolicit from Miſs Boyle; and, if refuſed, (added he, ſmiling,) would have broken the heart of an "old friend to the family."

Kiſſing my hand, and ſhaking my father's, he left the room, mounted his horſe, and gallopped out of ſight.

"My heart preſages (ſaid I) that the contents of this book are more valuable than I could wiſh."

"I

"I hope not, (replied my father:) but be it what it may, it was impoſſible to refuſe it, ſo urged."

I opened it. Five notes, of a hundred pounds each, were in one of the pockets, with a ſlip of paper:—"This trifle may aſſiſt the amiable and generous Miſs Boyle, when ſhe wiſhes to diffuſe pleaſure or comfort. Grudge not a kindred mind the ſupreme delight of participation."

"Good God! (I exclaimed,) what a noble ſoul! Well does *he* deſerve riches! Dear ſir, why ſhould ſuch a man live in an obſcure corner of the kingdom?—He ought to be a prince."

My father ſmiled at my enthuſiaſm, but confeſſed that he honoured the diſcernment of the late Mr. Cranfield in thus diſtinguiſhing true worth. This viſit of Mr. Cranfield's has been of infinite ſervice to us, by giving birth to new ideas, and a ſubject for converſation. I have no doubt but

but he has by enquiries underſtood the embarraſſment of our circumſtances, and from that knowledge generouſly came to viſit us. I admire his generoſity, at the ſame time that I feel mortified in being the object of it; but I moſt certainly ſhall appropriate his preſent to communicate "pleaſure and comfort," whenever I ſee a deſerving unfortunate perſon that wants either.

My dear Frederic comes to-morrow. I ſhall have much employment. His company will, I truſt, amuſe my dear father, though he tells me he ſhall bluſh before his boy, whom he has ſo greatly wronged; but even painful ideas, if of a different complexion, may tend to alleviate that grief which bears hard upon him, though he ſtruggles for compoſure, that he may ſpeak conſolation to me. I have indeed ſuffered ſo much, with a variety of diſtreſſing circumſtances, within this laſt month, that my health is not very good, and my

ſpirits

ſpirits much worſe; but time and patience are never failing remedies.

God bleſs you, dear Mrs. Rowe. Believe me always

Your affectionate friend,

MARY BOYLE.

LETTER X.

LADY GAYWIT TO MISS BOYLE.

MY dear dear Mary, I am in Elyſium! Only five days in town, and already enraptured with my new ſituation.—Lord, child! why, *we knew* nothing,—*ſaw* nothing, when we came to town for two

or

or three months in our humdrum way, with our old coach and odd-faſhioned harneſs, with a father, mother, and an old aunt. I have indeed heard my mother ſay, that, in former days, when we were confined to the nurſery, or under the dominion of that formal crab, Mrs. Rowe, in thoſe days ſhe uſed to mix with the gayeſt of the gay throng; was admired, careſſed, ſighed for, and toaſted, as the beautiful Mrs. Boyle; but of late years, you know ſhe could not figure away ſo much, and, growing fat, and out of ſhape, ſhe was no longer a beauty. Younger folks ſprung up, and ſhe was forced to give place; therefore, child, we know nothing of life, I aſſure you.

I have the ſweeteſt houſe in the world, commanding a view of the Green Park. A very pretty fellow, a friend of my lord's, came the evening of our arrival to welcome us to town, and ſaid, in my hearing, that I was an angel. My lord was in the beſt

ſpirits

ſpirits imaginable, though, between you and I, Mary, he had much cauſe to be otherwiſe; for you muſt allow that aunt Cranfield deceived us greatly. I thought the old ſoul was worth eight or ten thouſand pounds, which would have been a pretty addition; but a few paltry hundreds, my lord ſays, will ſcarcely pay for my opera-box.

The Earl is confined ſtill with the gout, but hopes to be in town ſhortly, with Lady Almeria, who is very handſome, very gay, and much admired.—But married women are the ton, and therefore I fear not Lady Almeria, were my attractions leſs. For three days I have been ſurrounded with trades-folks, and lived incog. my doors ſhut to every one but my lord's friend; but to-morrow an aunt of Gaywit's is to be admitted, when I ſhall have a few private parties, but ſhall not appear in public till after I am introduced.

I hope my father is well, and in better ſpirits than when I left him; — you alſo, my dear Mary. When do you ſet out on your Scotch expedition? Is Frederic to be ſent to College, or abroad, for education? or, rather, to complete his education? Pray inform me of every thing, and, when I have time, I ſhall ſend you ſuch delightful intelligence, ſuch enchanting details of every place, and every thing, that it will ſerve to amuſe you in your travels, for which, in return, I ſhall expect an account of all your adventures in the North.

Pray give me great credit for this epiſtle, for I have fifty things to ſay and to do, and the Lord knows how many people waiting for me. Adieu, my dear ſiſter; my lord's love, and our joint duty to my dear father.

Affectionately your's,

C. M. GAYWIT.

How provoking! I cannot be introduced till my firſt mourning is over, and I had

had ſet my heart upon going next Thurſday; ſo my lord ſays we ſhall go to Bath for a month.—O horrid! a letter this moment from the Earl, deſiring we will come immediately to Stanton-Place, becauſe a "large party of relations are coming there on a viſit, and 'tis proper we ſhould meet them." Hang relations! I wiſh there was no ſuch thing:—to go into the country to be made a ſhew of, among a parcel of old maidens, young ſimpletons, and hobbling white wigs!—ſo here's a houſe to be left with ſervants, which I intended making a Paradiſe of,—the Bath journey ſet aſide,—the town amuſements given up, and all for a group of country couſins, and a gouty old fellow I don't care for!—Sure I am very unfortunate!

LETTER XI.

MISS BOYLE TO LADY GAYWIT.

My dear Siſter,

IN opening your letter, the laſt ſentence, "Sure I am very unfortunate!" was the *firſt* that met my eyes, and made me ſhudder. I haſtily run over the contents, in fearful expectation; but, when I came to the concluſion, I really could not ſuppreſs my indignation at the levity which had dictated ſuch an expreſſion to your pen. Surely, my dear ſiſter, you could not wiſh to be introduced into public ſo ſoon after the recent death of a parent, who doated

on

on you, (to ſay nothing of Mrs. Cranfield's death, and the ſubſequent diſagreeable circumſtances to your family.) A feeling heart I know too well is not always a bleſſing to its poſſeſſor; but a female mind, devoid of tenderneſs and ſenſibility, is an unnatural monſter; nor will I for a moment think it poſſible that your heart had any ſhare in the idle rattle of your pen: it was a wicked quill, which I hope is thrown into the fire, and that by this time you are exerting all your agreeable talents to render yourſelf pleaſing in the eyes of Lord Gaywit's father and relations. Your own happineſs is ſo materially concerned in *deſerving their* approbation, that I cannot entertain a doubt of your endeavours to obtain it.

I admire your ſpirits: I love your playful gaiety; let both be under the dominion of prudence and decorum, and you may challenge reſpect as well as admiration. If I "play the elder ſiſter," as you have often ſportively

tively told me, pardon me, dear Caroline; be aſſured it proceeds from the warm intereſt I take in your happineſs, and becauſe I know how much the future peace of our dear father depends upon the conduct of his children.

He is ſtill extremely low at times, though he exerts his beſt endeavours, I am ſure, to hide it from me; but he is pale, thin, and often loſt in thought. Our dear Frederic has been here three days; he is a charming boy, but is neither deſigned for the College nor a foreign education. He wiſhes to be a profeſſional man; the law is his choice, and to that ſtudy he will ſoon dedicate his time. I am much delighted with him. An idle young man is an uſeleſs member of ſociety; employment will preſerve him from a thouſand errors. The law is an honourable profeſſion, may be uſeful to him hereafter, and the *practice* of it will be always optional.

In

In about ten days *he* will be ſettled, and the day for our departure is fixed. Heaven grant that the journey may be productive of health and peace to our dear parent! I ſhall rejoice to leave this houſe, where every ſtep I tread reminds me of a hundred painful circumſtances, that no time can obliterate. What may be our future lot I know not, but I think the worſt is paſt. There is only one event that can be any addition to the ſorrows I have felt, and heaven avert that for many many years.

May you, my dear and fortunate ſiſter, be happy! Pleaſing proſpects are before you; may no dark cloud intervene to throw a gloom over them! To deſerve happineſs is to *attain* it; for conſcious innocence defies the arrows of adverſity.

Preſent my beſt reſpects to Lord Gaywit. Our dear father ſends every affectionate wiſh, with his bleſſing to you and his lordſhip: Frederic's love.——Write often; the

contents will be a ſacred depoſit in the boſom of

Your ſincere and affectionate

MARY BOYLE.

LETTER XII.

LADY GAYWIT TO MISS BOYLE.

INDEED, my dear Mary, you are as grave and ſententious as any old virgin of fifty-five. Would any mortal believe that the letter I received from you was written by a pretty, lively, delicate, young, woman, under twenty? — Pray, my dear girl, do not monopolize the wiſdom of the ancients.

ancients. I know you are too good to feel envy, but ſome ill-natured obſervers would be apt to think, from the grave and melancholy turn of your letter, that the younger ſiſter, being a lady, had given that gloomy colouring to your pen, which finds ſo much fault with the levity of mine. But I do you more juſtice, becauſe I know you better.

I beg you will be undeceived, however, in ſuppoſing happineſs in *my* power. I aſſure you of the contrary.—Was it my wiſh to leave the enchanting town, and be moped to death with a parcel of old tabbies?—No, indeed! I am as croſs as any diſappointed virgin in the kingdom.—My lord's fondneſs is quite tireſome; the Earl's compliments, a repetition that diſguſts from the inſipidity of the perſon; and, were it not for the entertainment I carve out for myſelf, from ſome odd characters here, I ſhould be literally a walking ſtatue of diſcontent.

Stanton-Place is a ſweet *place* to thoſe that like the country, but I have had my fill; and, as to the inmates, you ſhall judge from my deſcription.

As in duty bound, I ſhall begin with the Earl. In perſon he is tall, large-boned, and hard featured; yet there is an air of grandeur that impreſſes you with a reſpect for his dignity. He ſpeaks freely, (hearty curſes ſometimes, when he has a twinge of the gout,) appears to be exceſſively fond of pretty women, who, I believe, he likes better than any thing,—except his money. He delights in talking of his anceſtry, and of his juvenile adventures; theſe are his favourite themes.

I have the honour to be a prodigious favourite; firſt, becauſe I am handſome; and ſecondly, becauſe I aſſume to the full as much dignity as himſelf, which increaſes my conſequence with him.——Not ſo with the Lady Almeria. I had been taught to expect a beauty;—no ſuch thing. She is neither

neither tall nor ſhort, but an inſipid medium: ſhe is neither fair nor brown, but a clear ſkin, with a faint tint of vermillion over it, which ſeems to give animation. A pair of expreſſive grey eyes, and tolerable eye-brows, with a pretty-enough turned cheek, and a Grecian noſe, complete the face. Her neck is handſome. She is neither fat nor thin; rather elegant in her manners, but not inviting either love or confidence. From this negative ſort of deſcription, you may conceive Lady Almeria is no beauty. Indeed, when I draw near her, conſcious of the amazing difference between us, ſhe always ſits down, and meaſures me with her *eye*, but not with an *eye of pleaſure*. She is very lively, like *you*; loves reading and dotes on her father like *you*; but, unlike you, ſhe is *very* vain, *very* fond of admiration, and *very* fond of the town, when the Earl is not in the country.—Such is Lady Almeria, and our hearts as little accord as our perſons.

The honourable Mr. and Mrs. Grantham are a pair of originals; our firſt couſins.—The gentleman is near ſixty, the lady about thirty, a parſon's daughter, "fair and fooliſh," and the moſt conceited creature in the world, always affecting ill-health, to ſhew her power over the old man's feelings;—too delicate to eat, (except in her own room, where I am aſſured ſhe devours a plate full of buttered toaſt for breakfaſt, and has always ſome reſerves of cakes for occaſional meals) ſhe wonders how women can be ſo robuſt to take hearty dinners; the wing or breaſt of a chicken is enough for her, her frame is ſo delicate, ſhe cannot bear the air to meet her,—unleſs a pretty fellow is by her ſide. In ſhort, ſhe is a lump of affectation, with no other recommendations to notice than a very fair ſkin, which is ſo eternally admired by her lover, that it is quite ſurfeiting to be near them.

The next, and moſt conſequential, perſonage is Mrs. Eleanor Stanton, a great aunt

aunt of my lord's by the father's ſide, and a beauty of the *laſt age*, if ſhe ever were a beauty at all,—a matter I am often inclined to diſpute with her, becauſe ſhe *laments* the degeneracy of the preſent age, the decreaſe of beauty, the loſs of decorum and modeſty, the total want of good-breeding, the ſhameful miſmanagement of money, and neglect of economy; and, above all, the conceit and forwardneſs of young women, who talk freely with the men, hold by their arms, admit them to their dreſſing-rooms, &c. &c.

In *her* days, a *few* years ago, ladies were admired for their *modeſty* and domeſtic talents, for their reſerve and delicacy; but now ſhe proteſts ſhe is every moment thrown into *confuſion* and *bluſhes*, by the impertinence of men and the indelicacy of women, or rather *young flirts*, who fancy themſelves *women*, moſt of whom, though married, ought ſtill to be confined to the nurſery.

Such are the ſentiments of aunt Eleanor. I have ſet my heart upon teazing her.

Next

Next comes Sir Roger Penrickard and his new married lady, (a ſecond wife,) and a great tall daughter of ſixteen, who has been brought up all her life at Penrickard-Caſtle, in Cornwall, where ſhe ſpent her time in feeding the poultry, running wild upon the moor, or reading romances,—is the greateſt novice you ever beheld in the knowledge of the world,—quite a Cælia in the woods, but wonderfully learned in knight-errantry, and will not ſuffer ſo much as the tip of her little finger to be touched by a *man*:—ſhe is of courſe a prodigious favourite with our maiden aunt,—is rather pretty, and *ſentimental* forſooth,—a dangerous tendency, when united to romance and ignorance of the world.

Sir Roger is a good jolly knight, a literal old ſoul,—bluſters for his king and country, though not much acquainted with either, the chief extent of his knowledge being confined to tin mines and pilchards, which

which he conceives to be the great wealth of the nation.

His lady is a different kind of a perſon, and my great averſion. She is near thirty, and tolerably handſome, the daughter of a lord, who had mortgaged great part of his eſtates to Sir Roger, and was ſo conſiderably indebted to him, that he was under apprehenſions for the conſequences. He received a viſit from Sir Roger whilſt he was in the country with his daughter. Sir Roger's buſineſs was of an unpleaſant nature, but moſt fortunately he was ſtruck dumb by the charms of the lady, and forgot his errand.

The father and daughter had cunning enough to perceive the ſudden impreſſion, and the advantages were too great to be neglected. The young lady had been exhibited above ten years in the faſhionable world, but the want of fortune had leſſened her attractions, and ſhe remained a ſpinſter, (not very willingly, I am ſure.)—

The conſideration of marrying an immenſe fortune, of being her own miſtreſs, and governing her huſband, infinitely overbalanced the trifling drawback of above thirty years difference in age, the unpoliſhed manners and robuſt figure of Sir Roger, and the incumbrance of a tall daughter.

Governed by prudential motives, ſhe ſpared no pains to enſlave the heart and ſoul of the admiring knight, who at length took courage to apply to the father. What were the preliminaries or agreement is unknown, but the marriage was ſoon concluded, with a noble ſettlement on the lady. My lord appeared free from his embarraſſments, and Sir Roger the moſt obliged and happieſt man alive.

They have been married about four months, and the lady's family being nearly related to the Earl, Sir Roger, his lady, and daughter, were invited here for a month, on their

their coming to town after the wedding.—The old man dotes on his wife, who keeps him in leading ſtrings, and ſubmits implicitly to her unqueſtionable ſuperior judgment.——She is exceſſively vain, inſufferably arrogant, eternally talking of the gay and great world, and looking with contempt on thoſe leſs acquainted with faſhionable circles than herſelf,—a great coquet, and fond of engroſſing all the attention of the gentlemen. In ſhort, I hate her;—there is a ſort of rivalſhip already commenced between us for the admiration of two beaux, who yet remain to be deſcribed.

Sir James Nichols is, I ſuppoſe, near forty, but he is the very ſoul of faſhion and elegance; ſo attentive, ſo inſinuating, his compliments ſo gratifying, and his acknowledged reputation for faſhionable manners ſo high, that he confers honour and diſtinction wherever he viſits, and his approbation eſtabliſhes the claim of a pretty woman to general admiration. To eb

diſtinguiſhed

diſtinguiſhed by ſuch a man muſt be the wiſh of every woman, and on that theme will I contend with the odious Lady Penrickard.

Mr. Gardner, Lord Gaywit's friend, who was our firſt viſitor, and attended us here, is younger than Sir James, and a prettier fellow of the two; but he is grave, ſentimental, and ſo reſpectful and diſtant in his devoirs, that it will take time and trouble to animate him; yet the conqueſt would be gratifying, becauſe of the difficulty.—Lady Pen ſhall not have that triumph, I am determined.

So now, dear Mary, you know the whole group at Stanton-Place, and I muſt be ſtupid indeed, if I do not pick up amuſement whilſt I am condemned to ſtay here.

I am ſorry to hear our father ſtill continues ſo indifferent in health and ſpirits. Travelling will, I truſt, reſtore both. I cannot ſay I approve of Frederic's choice.

A young

A young lad of ſpirit might have appeared to more advantage in the army, with a better chance of ſettling well in life, for a red coat and a cockade is a never-failing recommendation to our ſex;—but I ſuppoſe he has ſome of his dear ſiſter's antediluvian notions, and will be poring over old muſty folios, inſtead of paying court to the ladies; —ſo much the worſe for him.

Write to me of every thing you ſee and hear. In return, I will be very good, and without reſerve give you intelligence of all our motions here. Aunt Stanton, to whom I affect great civility, has given me the hiſtory of our couſins; and, I ſee ſhe hates Lady Pen more than ſhe diſlikes me, I will be on her ſide *at preſent*.

Adieu, my dear Mary; I expect another ſermon: I will be as good as I can, and

Your affectionate ſiſter,

C. M. GAYWIT.

My lord joins me in love and duty.—Pray give me great credit for this long letter.

LETTER XIII.

MISS BOYLE TO MRS. ROWE.

IN three days, my dear friend, we ſhall begin our journey. Frederic is ſettled to his perfect ſatisfaction. My father has ſucceeded in arranging his affairs much better than he expected, and we ſhall begin our tour tolerably comfortable.

My ſiſter and Lord Gaywit are on a viſit to Stanton-Place. I underſtand ſhe is in high

high favour with the Earl. Heaven grant ſhe may continue to preſerve his eſteem.—She has promiſed to correſpond with me, though the rambling life we are about to commence muſt impede regular returns, as we ſhall not always know our deſtination.

Every circumſtance that can afford you pleaſure or information, you may rely on from me, as I know you will be intereſted for the happineſs of your little friend. A thouſand adieus, my loved monitreſs. Continue your advice and inſtruction to

Your ever grateful and affectionate

MARY BOYLE.

LETTER XIV.

MISS BOYLE TO LADY GAYWIT.

"A Sermon!"—Alas! no, my dear ſiſter. A ſermon would not catch a ſingle glance of your eye; you know what is *right*, and you ſee what is *wrong*;—to what purpoſe then ſhould I write lectures, which, *if read*, whilſt they militate againſt your predominant paſſions, will be diſregarded.

If you ſee vanity and coquetry odious in Lady Penrickard, affectation diſguſting in Mrs. Grantham, and folly conſpicuous in the conduct of others, you want no glaſs to point

point the ridicule, no monitor to warn you againſt the contagion. The picture is before you: turn from it with contempt and abhorrence, and let your conduct be regulated by good ſenſe, propriety, and affection, to your huſband and his relations. The very beſt of us have foibles, which, if placed in a ludicrous or malicious point of view, will turn the laugh againſt us, or inſpire diſlike and ſcorn.

Your wit is too poignant,—your paſſions too lively. It is much eaſier to provoke reſentment, and incur hatred, than to conciliate affection and eſteem. Prejudices, once conceived, are difficult to eradicate; therefore let thoſe you give birth to be on the favourable ſide; for, be aſſured, it is always worth while to acquire eſteem and reſpect, even from perſons indifferent to us.—— Here ends the "ſermon," and now begins the affectionate ſolicitude of a ſiſter.

Beauty,

Beauty, however captivating, ſeldom obtains more than a tranſient admiration, without the poſſeſſor has "qualities of more worth." The affection inſpired by a *form only* can have no durability, for that will fade, and even the charm of novelty will ſometimes ſupercede beauty, when grown familiar to the eye. You are not ignorant of theſe truths; then ſurely, my dear Caroline, it behoves you to cheriſh ſuch amiable qualities as may procure to you reſpect and eſteem.

Flirting and coquetry are diſgraceful to any woman, but unpardonable in a married one. She, who wiſhes to engage the attention of other men, trifles with her huſband's peace, and dances on the edge of a precipice, where the leaſt falſe ſtep endangers the deſtruction of her honour, character, and happineſs, for ever! What is Sir James, or Mr. Gardner, to you?—As acquaintances of your huſband's, while they obſerve that reſpect due to your character

character as a wife and a woman of honour, they are entitled to your civility in return; but, if they forget your ſituation, and addreſs you in the language of adulation,—if they ſeek to obtain more attention from you by *flattery* than by the reverence due to you as a married woman, ſhun, fly them, my dear Caroline, as you would vipers, who lie in ambuſh to ſting you to death. Aſſume that conſequence attached to your character, and even libertines will reſpect you. If you wiſh to "*triumph*" over the follies of *others*, let it be by the ſuperiority of your virtues and good conduct, and glorious will be your triumph!

Forget, my dear ſiſter, that I am *not twenty*; but conſider that, from the inſtructions of a father, and the unremitting attention of our worthy governeſs, Mrs. Rowe,—from a ſerious and reflecting turn of mind, I have been in the habits of ſtudy and obſervation, which hundreds of young women, who live in the gay world,

are unhappily deprived of: ſuffer me then to ſpeak my mind freely, and alſo to entreat your confidence in return. Have no reſerves; for, be aſſured, no perſon will be more indulgent than myſelf, nor any one ſo truly anxious for your happineſs and future peace.— To-morrow we ſhall begin our tour. My father intends ſpending a few days at York; write therefore, I entreat you, a circumſtantial account of every thing that paſſes at Stanton-Place. I am deeply intereſted in the events, and your confidence ſhall be ſacred. Direct to be left at the poſt-houſe, in York, or Berwick. Frederic is ſettled to his wiſh: he will write to you.—Our dear father's love and bleſſing. Adieu, my dear Caroline, it may be *long* before I ſee you, but my affectionate wiſhes for your happineſs will be conſtantly your's.

MARY BOYLE.

LETTER XV.

LADY GAYWIT TO MISS BOYLE.

MERCY on me! why, my dear girl, you have written an *eſſay!*—matter enough for a half-dozen *ſermons!* and all for what?—to rail againſt beauty, wit, and ſpirit,—to make a reſpectable frigid grandmother of a young woman not eighteen.—O dear, O dear!—wiſdom will come—when it may, and your lectures prove a good ſubſtitute, until Minerva appear in perſon.

You are the moſt unreaſonable young Mentor in the world. You ſolicit my confidence, and then turn my ingenuouſneſs againſt myſelf; and, when I have ſuch a world of buſineſs on my hands, require a "circumſtantial" narrative of proceedings, that you may write freſh lectures.—Very modeſt and reaſonable! — and I, a good-natured docile creature, ſit down to comply with ſuch an encroachment upon my pleaſures and patience, with all the conſequences before my eyes.—— No matter, while I only mean to divert the tedious hours, to beguile the time of moping and mourning, I ſhall be perfectly ſatisfied with my intentions, and keep clear of the "precipice," which alarms your imagination. After this preamble, I expect your fears do not outſtrip my actions, nor doubt my abilities to extricate myſelf from ſeeming perplexities whenever I pleaſe.

I am crowned with laurels, for I have humbled Lady Pen, by attracting the ſole attention

attention of our two beaux, and have abſolutely, like another Iphigenia, warmed "the cold flinty heart" of Mr. Gardner.—I proteſt to you that I care not ſixpence for either him or Sir James, but the approbation of the one ſtamps you into faſhion, and there is a ſuperlative pleaſure in ſubduing the frozen gravity of the other into a dying inamorato.

My lord laughs at my playfulneſs, and is delighted with the admiration that I excite. The Earl is pleaſed with my wit; Sir Roger ſtares at me, without knowing whether he ſhould applaud or not, leſt his "dear lady" ſhould lecture him.

Mr. Grantham is ſo taken up with adminiſtering to the delicate appetite and languiſhiug affectation of his lady, (who I can ſee wiſhes him in the other world,) that all my airs and graces are loſt upon that old inſenſible. But, could you ſee the ſpiteful glances of Lady Pen, (I never can

write the whole of her odious name,) the allurements ſhe vainly throws out to attract the notice of Sir James, the malicious ſarcaſms ſhe is perpetually venting againſt young flirts, and the blindneſs of ſome huſbands, while ſhe is throwing herſelf into a thouſand attitudes to diſplay her own *charms*; even the ſerenity of your countenance, my grave ſiſter, would be deranged. I join very heartily in all her declamations, with the moſt provoking contemptuous nonchalence imaginable, and by my ſneers rebound the ball againſt herſelf.—Thus we ſeem the prettieſt friends in the world, whilſt we are talking *at* each other.

But we have a tragedy-ſcene in embrio, or I am miſtaken. The gay and coquetiſh Lady Almeria is certainly far gone in the tender paſſion for Sir James, he "expiring" for another. The romantic Maria Penrickard "ſighs, and looks, and ſighs, again" at Mr. Gardner, a man old enough to be the chit's father;—but his ſedate and ſentimental

ſentimental ſpeeches, with a few compliments, abſolutely ironical ones on her rage for books, has ſo delighted and gratified the poor thing's darling paſſion, that ſhe is loſt in gratitude and adoration.

Aunt Eleanor, to whom I pay great court *juſt now*, this morning obſerved to me the ſtrange alteration in Maria. I pretended to think it reſulted from ill health, and the indifferent treatment ſhe met with from her mother-in-law. This ſet up Mrs. Eleanor; ſhe began to abuſe Lady Pen moſt heartily, was quite ſcandalized at her conduct, and ſhocked at the liberties married women allowed themſelves. I thought ſhe had more than one in her eye, but did not chooſe to apply it to myſelf, pretended to coincide with her, and obſerved there was great difference between a conſtitutional gaiety, that meant no harm, and the languiſhing airs a lady of thirty exhibited.

"You are right, niece, (ſaid ſhe;) ſhe ought to take pattern by *me*: ſhe does not

ſee *me* flirt with the men, and expoſe my perſon as ſhe ſhamefully does, though it would be more pardonable in me to violate decorum than a married woman and a mother-in-law. But the faſhion of the preſent day is ſo changed from what it was ſome years ago, when I was a *girl*,—every thing is ſo indecorous, ſuch a violation to virgin-modeſty, that I am ſhocked every hour of my life, by the conduct of thoſe about me."

I perfectly agreed with her, and lamented that faſhion and an apprehenſion of being thought a ruſtic, and diſgracing my lord's taſte, obliged me to dreſs differently from what I had been accuſtomed to. This won her heart; we had a long converſation at the expence of the abſent, and for many reaſons I am now determined to keep in with aunt Nell.——A ſummons to dinner.

Mary, men are deceitful wretches; women blind, infatuated, and credulous!—After dinner, the Earl requeſted I would play

play Piquet with him. He had been ſo very civil, I could not well decline it, and my little familiar was not at hand to ſuggeſt a plauſible excuſe, ſo I accompanied him to the library, and, being careleſs and out of humour, I ſuffered him to win every game, by which *I* won *his* heart, and at length obtained my freedom.

My good or evil genius, I know not which, put it into my head to ſtroll into the ſhrubbery, which is a very large and a very fine one, with ſeveral ſeats incloſed among the ſhrubs, ſo as to be unperceived until you are cloſe upon them. I had ſeated myſelf in a ſmall alcove, when ſuddenly I heard voices ſpeaking low at the back of it. The flowers and foliage made it impenetrable to the view, but, as the voices ſeemed ſtationary, and I diſtinguiſhed the odious croaking of Lady Pen, my curioſity made me guilty of meanneſs, and I liſtened.

To my infinite aſtoniſhment, I heard Sir James ſaying a thouſaud tender things,

and the moſt extravagant compliments on her beauty, ſwearing he was dying for her, and that ſhe was the moſt charming woman in the world. She had the impudence to aſk his opinion of me.

"Certainly Lady Gaywit was a lovely young woman, but ſhe was *too much of a girl* to pleaſe him. He admired and praiſed her, as any man muſt, but Gaywit had been witleſs and infatuated when he married ſuch a mere child."

Can you wonder, if, worked into madneſs, I burſt upon them, upbraided, and expoſed, them, as they deſerved? Such, indeed, were my firſt emotions, but inſtant reflection retained me in my place. Like moſt other eaves-droppers, I heard much more than I liked, or ſhall repeat;—but a deſire of revenge ſupported me, and if I do not make him repent of his contempt of his "meer child," and the poor pun on Gaywit,—if I do not render her both ridiculous and contemptible, I will be content to be thought a child as long as I live.

My

My boſom was in tumults, but I outſtayed them, (admire my patience!) though I underſtood they ſeparated in the ſhrubbery. With conſummate art they have conducted themſelves, he pretending to be dying for me, and ſhe appearing vexed at the attention he paid to me. I confeſs my ſelf-conſequence is wounded, but, if I am not glorioufly revenged, I am not a woman. I am now out of humour with myſelf and all the world, yet I am going to the company in the drawing room, like the "queen of loves and ſmiles." Farewell, dear Mary; let me hear of all your peregrinations and adventures. Perhaps you may find another letter at Berwick. — Love and duty to our dear father.

Ever ſincerely your's,

C. M. GAYWIT.

LETTER XVI.

LADY GAYWIT TO MISS BOYLE.

WRITE I muſt, for I have no confidante here but dame Eleanor, and my ſchemes are not ripe enough for a communication to her. I know you will blame me, my preciſe ſiſter, but reflect on my provocations, and make proper allowances.

I commanded my feelings moſt wonderfully yeſterday, when I entered the drawing-room; ſmiled on Lady Pen, languiſhed tenderly on Mr. Gardner, and received the little attentions of Sir James with an obliging politeneſs.

politeneſs. In ſhort, I pleaſed every one, and the Earl once, in a rapture, exclaimed that "Gaywit was the luckieſt fellow in the univerſe, to have ſuch a wife," and pinned me cloſe to his ſide for the evening, where I exerted every art to pleaſe him, and obtain admiration from others.

Almeria, who is certainly in love with that deceitful wretch Sir James, has loſt all her vivacity and coquetry; ſhe, poor thing, ſuſpects me of being her rival, and I could ſee was tortured to death by the notice I drew from him. The little romantic Maria looked at me with envy and anxiety, and Pen with eyes of ſpite and jealouſy. *I*, exulting in my own conſequence, viewed them with an air of ſuperiority and diſdain, affecting in my manners great complacency whenever they ventured to addreſs me.—Oh! it was a ſcene of triumph!—Sir Roger ſeemed like a ſnail, ſhrinking into its ſhell, afraid to ſpeak or look. The whole group were perplexed or mortified, for I ſucceeded

in

in drawing both gentlemen after me, wherever I moved.

I ſtill continue the vulgar cuſtom of riſing what is called very early *here*, though two hours later than my good ſiſter, I'll be ſworn,—nine o'clock. This morning was uncommonly fine: I wanted to indulge in my own reveries, ſo eſcaped into the garden.

In a ſhort time I ſaw Sir James walking towards me. The wretch joined me, and ſaid a thouſand fine things on the brilliancy of my complexion, a number of tender exclamations, and a profuſion of heart-felt ſighs,—to all which I made no reply, till, tenderly reproaching my diſdainful ſilence, I ſtopped ſhort, looking him full in the face, then turned round: "Bleſs me! (I exclaimed,) I proteſt I thought Lady Penrickard was behind, to whom you were addreſſing all theſe pretty things. Is it poſſible they can be deſigned for me?"

"Ah!

"Ah! (cried he, throwing the moſt dying look into his eyes,) and "*is it poſſible*" the divine Lady Gaywit can for a moment ſuppoſe any other object deſerving of adoration but herſelf? — Are my ſenſes hoodwinked, or my taſte ſo depraved in her eyes, that ſhe mentions a woman ſo infinitely beneath her in every attraction, that it is a degree of profanation to attempt a compariſon."

I will not repeat to you my anſwer, nor the enſuing converſation, but I inſiſted upon his publicly affronting Lady Pen, as a proof of his ſincerity. I ſaw *this* condition perplexed him, which made me the more peremptory, and at length he promiſed faithfully to obey me. I muſt ſhew him a few little attentions, by way of encouragement, till my revenge is complete: mean time, between you and me, I have made an abſolute conqueſt of the ſentimental Gardner, which will be a triumph indeed!

We

We expect company to dinner, therefore I ſhall not ſend off my letter till to-morrow. Adieu; I am going to dreſs for conqueſt; I ſhall ſoon leave off odious black, though it doubtleſs ſets off the complexion.

I entered the drawing-room before dinner, perfectly ſatisfied with my own figure. I was preſented to the company,—two gentlemen and a lady; Sir William Allen, a genteel decent looking man; Mr. Hardman, a ſtrange, meagre-looking, ſhambling, old fellow, with ſpectacles on his noſe, through which his ſharp eyes, more than half ſunk in his hand, gazed frightfully on every object near him; a pair of drum-ſtick legs, covered with worſted ſtockings, black velvet ſmall clothes; that is, they *had been* black, with a large darn upon one knee; a red cloth waiſtcoat, with pockets half a yard long; an old grey coat, with large white buttons, completed the dreſs of this ſtrange figure.

From

From him I turned my eyes, to examine the lady, who appeared to be about ſixty. She was ſhort and fat, with a face like a full moon; her hair drawn up tight over a cuſhion, a little dreſs-cap, with long lappets, her ears quite naked, and red as fire; a very ſmall lace handkerchief over an immenſe neck, with a black lace one twiſted in the middle; a hoop, over which was a thick roſe-colour ſilk ſack, with ſilver flowers; two flounces to the petticoat, an amazing long ſtomacher, ruffle-cuffs, and deep point-ruffles underneath; green and ſilver ſhoes completed her dreſs. This lady was introduced as *Miſs* Babbington.

I ſeated myſelf by aunt Nell, who really looked a reſpectable ſpinſter from the contraſt.

"For heaven's ſake! (whiſpered I,) who and what are theſe oddities?"

"Huſh! (ſaid ſhe,) I will inform you by and by."

Juſt

Juſt then the door was flung open, and a wild-looking fellow in green, his hair ſtrangely deranged, half-boots on, and a whip in his hand, half-bowing to the company, run up to the Earl,—"Upon my ſoul, I beg your lordſhip's pardon; I have been detained, till this moment, by two of the fineſt race-horſes in the kingdom. 'Twas impoſſible to leave the bet undetermined: I have pocketed a cool thouſand, and was not ſenſible how the hours flew. Paſſing your gate, I ſtepped in to make my apology, as my dreſs will not permit me to ſit with the ladies, and I find I ſhall be too late for your dinner-hour by the time I get home."

"If you can prevail upon the ladies to admit of your apology, (returned the Earl,) if they will pardon you, and allow for your deſhabille, I think you had better eat your mutton here than return home."

"Aye, do, Scamper, (cried Lord Gaywit, ringing the bell;) let my ſervant throw a little powder into your hair, and, as you have

have no ſpurs, let the duſt be taken off your boots, and the ladies will pardon you I know.

" Upon my ſoul, they are infinitely good to me, (bowing round, though not a creature ſpoke,) and I will attend you in five minutes."

He withdrew, and I again applied to aunt Nell for information.

" He is little better than a brute, (whiſpered ſhe.) The family is ancient, but his grandfather married his cook : ſhe afterwards took a fancy to the groom, ſo it was a ſtrange heterogeneous breed. He retains the family-pride, and is vain of his perſon ; but, reſembling grandmamma and *her* favourite, he is a great epicure, and has a violent paſſion for horſes. It is an undecided point which of the two he prefers, — a good dinner or a fine horſe. Next to them, is to be admired by the ladies."

" I fancy (ſaid I) he receives but little gratification from the latter."

" Indeed,

"Indeed, (replied ſhe,) you are miſtaken. He is a *lord*, and has a very fine eſtate: theſe are allurements few can withſtand.—Hundreds will flatter, cringe, and lie, to have the honour of a companionſhip with a nobleman; and every vain and ambitious female, for miles round, is ſpreading her ſnares to entrap him. One or two have actually become huntreſſes, and leap over hedge and ditch with him. *Miſs* Babbington (added ſhe, ſmiling and ſpeaking lower) has *been dying* for him theſe three years.—Such forwardneſs and indecorum is quite ſhocking."

Gaywit, who was advancing to us, caught her laſt words: "Upon my honour, I am of the ſame opinion,—to whiſper in company is quite indecorous; and I begin to ſuſpect my prudent aunt is telling all her love ſtories to my wife; but take care, madam, it is dangerous making a confidante of a married woman: I ſhall certainly hear of all your little amours."

She was about to reply with ſome aſperity, I believe, when a ſummons to dinner and Lord Scamper interrupted the converſation. At table, I was the goddeſs to whom all paid homage: the men with admiration, the dear ladies by their envious glances, acknowledged my ſuperiority, and, I dare ſay, wiſhed me fifty miles off;—for my part, I was ſo amuſed with obſerving Mr. Hardman and Lord Scamper, that I really forgot my own conſequence while I was at the table.

You would have ſuppoſed they had laid a bet who ſhould eat moſt; the only difference was, that Hardman eat voraciouſly of every thing, and the other confined himſelf to the choiceſt diſhes. The former I think laid in a ſtock for a month, and the other muſt hunt or race for three days to come, to obtain a freſh appetite.

When we retired from dinner, we ſtrolled into the ſhrubbery. I drew aunt Nell aſide.

"Tell

"Indeed, (replied ſhe,) you are miſtaken. He is a *lord*, and has a very fine eſtate: theſe are allurements few can withſtand.—Hundreds will flatter, cringe, and lie, to have the honour of a companionſhip with a nobleman; and every vain and ambitious female, for miles round, is ſpreading her ſnares to entrap him. One or two have actually become huntreſſes, and leap over hedge and ditch with him. *Miſs* Babbington (added ſhe, ſmiling and ſpeaking lower) has *been dying* for him theſe three years.—Such forwardneſs and indecorum is quite ſhocking."

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When we retired from dinner, we ſtrolled into the ſhrubbery. I drew aunt Nell aſide.

"Tell

"Tell me, I beſeech you, who is that mean, horrid-looking, voracious, animal, and what is *Miſs* Babbington?"

"How curious you are? (anſwered ſhe.) Mr. Hardman has an immenſe fortune, part of which deſcended to him from his father, and the reſt acquired by the meaneſt parſimony. He lives in an old decayed building, moated round like a caſtle. The moat was dug to fortify him againſt thieves: his doors are of an impenetrable thickneſs, the windows have bars and grates, the walls high and ſtrong: he keeps fire-arms charged in every room; one ſervant only reſides with him, who, like Scrub, has every occupation. It is ſaid he keeps great ſums, in his houſe, in ſome ſecret place, which he lends out at exorbitant intereſt. His riches are the paſſport into every gentleman's houſe in the neighbourhood, as there are few who are not ſometimes obliged to him. By this means, he indulges in gluttony, at the expence of others, and ſtarves himſelf at home; he has run up a hovel, outſide the moat; here he turns out his old woman,

when he goes out, fearing to truſt any thing but a fierce bull-dog. As he is really deſcended from a reſpectable family, that circumſtance and the convenience of his money engage attention even from thoſe who deſpiſe him. He always goes off the moment he can riſe from table, for his mind is on the rack left any body (which is next to an impoſſibility) ſhould get into his houſe. His nights are ſpent in watchfulneſs, his days in fear and anxiety. Nobody invites him, yet no one refuſes him admittance, and every perſon knows he never ventures to leave his treaſures but when hunger and gluttony urge him to ſeek for a good meal.——Such is Mr Hardman."

"A moſt deteſtable character! (I exclaimed) but his avarice is his puniſhment. Every line in his face pourtrays the miſery of his mind: one cannot wiſh him a greater evil, except the loſs of his money.—But *Miſs* Babbington, my dear madam——"

"Is the daughter of a baronet, and was once thought an agreeable woman. She took

took it into her head to be a beauty, and, as ſhe had a large fortune, and conſtantly attended the court, and all faſhionable circles, ſhe met with people enough ready to countenance her vanity. With this idea, ſhe carried her expectations to ſuch an extravagant height, that gentlemen were deterred from making any addreſſes, by the haughty inſolence of her behaviour, and the ſtiff grandeur of her dreſs, which no change of faſhion has induced her to alter, as ſhe loudly exclaims at the folly of women of birth and fortune levelling themſelves with their waiting maids and mechanics, by their ſimplicity of dreſs. In this ſtyle of ſullen grandeur ſhe lived in the gay world, till ſhe became the ridicule of both ſexes, and it was with much reluctance that ſhe found herſelf obliged to renounce the town, or alter her ſtyle of dreſs, living, and manners, to avoid being pointed at as an object of deriſion.

" While ſhe was balancing at this painful alternative, an event took place, which gave

gave her a thorough diſguſt to "a capricious and ill-diſcerning world." A very pretty young woman lived with her as a humble *friend*, who, though genteelly born and educated, was unhappily without parents or fortune. This young creature attracted the notice of an earl's eldeſt ſon, which at length occaſioned a journey to Scotland. Her aſtoniſhment and rage was inexpreſſible, that a girl, ſo ſimple in her dreſs and manners, ſhould have obtained a rank in life for which ſhe had vainly ſighed ſo many years, — was a mortification ſhe could not ſupport; and reſolved never to witneſs the triumph of this friend, who muſt have precedence of her in public. She flew from an ill-judging and degenerate world to be the empreſs of a village. She purchaſed a fine Gothic manſion in this neighbourhood, where ſhe lives in ſtate, preſerving in her houſe, furniture, dreſs, and manners, the cuſtoms of half a century back, and is the wonder and admiration of

all the ruſtics round the country, for every perſon is ſecondary to *Miſs* Babbington."

I had ſcarcely thanked Dame Eleanor for her communications, before we were joined by the gentlemen and the other ladies. I ſaw Lady Pen arranging herſelf by the ſide of Sir James: I drew near to them.

"My dear Lady Penrickard, (ſaid I, loud enough to attract the attention of the company,) do you recollect a converſation that paſſed in a ſhrubbery lately, between a young man of faſhion and a *middle-aged* lady: I think you heard of it. — What would you ſay now, if I were to tell you that *I* have had a converſation with the ſame gentleman, in the courſe of which he ridiculed the folly of that vain woman, complaining he was bored to death by her troubleſome fondneſs, his heart having been long devoted to another.—Is he not a deceitful wretch?"

"Upon my word, (ſaid ſhe, ſtammering, in the utmoſt confuſion,) I know not what you

you allude to, nor whom you are talking of."

"Indeed! then, you did *not* hear the converſation, and I am miſtaken; but *you*, Sir James, I am certain, heard the gentleman ridicule the lady in the moſt pointed terms imaginable:—deny it, if you can."

"I never contradict a lady, madam," anſwered he, not much leſs confuſed than poor Pen, who had fallen a little back, but I ſtuck cloſe to her.

"Indeed, Sir James, you will allow he was *too ſevere* upon the poor lady, who, though ſhe is not *very young* nor *very handſome*, yet, not knowing the gentleman's ſtrong attachment to a more deſirable object, may be pardoned for her endeavours to obtain ſo valuable a prize. *I* really forgive and pity her diſappointment."

The laſt word was ſcarcely uttered, before Lady Pen was ſeized with a violent hyſteric, the ſuddenneſs of which, with the wonder and curioſity I had excited, put

all the company into an uproar. She was conveyed to the very alcove where I had made the diſcovery. Sir Roger was like a mad man: Sir James whiſpered me, "lovely mercileſs tyrant!" For my part, having had my revenge, I was very aſſiduous about the lady, and appeared equally ſurpriſed with the reſt at the ſudden diſorder.

Burnt feathers, hartſhorn, water, and a *good ſhaking*, which aunt Nell (I thank her) adviſed, at length reſtored the creſt-fallen lady to her ſenſes. As every one crowded round her, and ſeemed concerned at her illneſs, ſhe gueſſed I had not been more explicit. Sir James was attentive to Lady Almeria, whoſe weak nerves were deranged by this ſcene: (ſhe is aſtoniſhingly altered.) Mr. Grantham was adminiſtring drops to his delicate wife; Maria was hanging on the arm of her admired Gardner; the reſt and myſelf were employed in reſtoring the lady to her ſenſes. She thanked us in a low tremulous voice, accounted for her illneſs

illneſs by a *ſudden chill* from eating too much fruit, and was aſſiſted into the houſe by Lord Gaywit and Lord Scamper, Sir Roger following greatly agitated.

We ſoon returned to the drawing-room, but the poor lady had retired, and ſent an apology to the company for not joining them.

I know my dear Mary will lecture me for this affair, but revenge is ſweet, and triumph over a ——no, not a rival, an *impertinent woman*, is the moſt tranſporting thing in life.

The moment we were ſeated, all requeſted me for an explanation of the converſation I had alluded to. I begged to be excuſed; "I had accidentally been a witneſs to it, between Sir James and *his friend*, and thought Lady Penrickard had been of the party; but, as I was miſtaken, it would be extremely ungenerous to make public what was intended perhaps for confidential

information. Sir James was the only perſon to be applied to."

He was horridly out of countenance.—"I beg leave to imitate your ladyſhip's diſcretion, and remain ſilent."

"What the devil is all this about? (cried Gaywit, he and Lord Scamper having only joined us as the lady was taken ill;) what ſecret can there be between my wife and Sir James improper for us to know?"

"Indeed I can't tell, (replied aunt Nell, drawing up her ſcraggy neck, with an inverted eye at me.) In *my* days, married women had no *ſecrets* with young gentlemen, or *private* converſations."

I think Gaywit coloured, though he affected to laugh, in which I joined very awkwardly I believe; for the unexpected anſwer of the formal old maid a little diſconcerted *me*. She had better let me alone: I was half inclined to be her friend; let her beware of calling forth my talent of ridicule at her expence.

I per-

I perceived, in the courſe of the evening, that Sir William Allen was an admirer of Lady Almeria, and that the Earl approved of his predilection. He appears to be a polite ſenſible man, but too grave for Lady Almeria, though ſhe *is not* what *ſhe has* been. That wicked Sir James has made ſtrange commotions among us, and the deſpairing ſentimental Gardner too, what ſhall I do with him?

I was talking of you the other morning to Maria, who follows me about like my ſhadow, whether from love or jealouſy is a queſtionable point. She was lamenting that ſhe had no mother or ſiſter to be a friend or monitor, at a period of life when both were neceſſary. I told her I had a ſiſter, not twenty, who was wiſdom perſonified, a model of prudence and patience, to the laſt of which I was greatly indebted, and it were my own fault if I were not advantaged by the former. "What ſay

you, Maria, ſhall I claim the benefit of my ſiſter's advice for you?"

"Ah! (ſaid ſhe,) I ſhould indeed be both honoured and gratified by ſuch a condeſcenſion from Miſs Boyle. Young as I am, I have a ſoul capable of friendſhip, and a docility of diſpoſition that would with tranſport receive the inſtructions of an amiable and diſintereſted friend."

"You talk in heroics, Maria. In theſe days, *diſintereſted* perſons are ſcarcely to be found: you know nothing of the world, child."

"Indeed I do not, (anſwered ſhe, interrupting me.) Mr. Gardner tells me I have only book-knowledge, which in general deſcribes things as they *ought* to be, not as what they *are*; and that I may form very erroneous opinions from the ſtyle of reading I have been accuſtomed to."

"And does Mr. Gardner tell you ſo?" Perhaps *he* may like to be himſelf your inſtructor, and initiate you into a knowledge of the world."

I believe

"I believe I looked very archly, for the poor girl bluſhed ſcarlet deep.

"No, (ſaid ſhe, with a penſive look;) Mr. Gardner's ſuperiority of underſtanding cannot condeſcend to throw away his time ſo unprofitably."

We were interrupted by the entrance of Gaywit, and ſhe withdrew: but I really pity her. The mode of education ſhe has received, the romantic ideas ſhe has imbibed, her total ignorance of men and manners, the ſoftneſs of her diſpoſition, and the example of her ſtep-mother, may altogether prove fatal to her peace. She would be an excellent pupil for you, and it would be a meritorious act to preſerve an amiable motherleſs girl, whoſe ſimplicity and ſenſibility may prove her ruin.

Let my concern and charity for the neglected Maria win me your good opinion, my *good* ſiſter. A conſtitutional gaiety of heart, vanity, and a love of power, with the dear delight of exciting admiration and

envy, may lead me into *little* indiſcretions; (you ſee I do not ſpare myſelf,) but pride, ſelf-love, and a *ſprinkling* of diſcretion, ſhall extricate me all in good time, never fear.

This enormous packet is a ſtriking proof that all my hours are not devoted to folly and coquetry, and, as opportunities offer, I ſhall continue to write. Gaywit joins me in duty and love. Let me ſoon hear of your hair-breadth eſcapes, and a thouſand pretty adventures.

Your affectionate

C. M. GAYWIT.

LETTER

LETTER XVII.

MISS BOYLE TO LADY GAYWIT.

YOUR firſt letter, my dear ſiſter, was put into my hand as I was getting into the carriage to leave York. Our dear father, obſerving the addreſs from Stanton-Place, ſaid, "Mary, I hope all is well there." It was a tender hope, which I was eager to realize. Pardon me if I were ſuſpicious that the general tenor of the letter might not prove very pleaſing to my father, I therefore glanced my eye here and there, and, looking at the concluſion, aſſured him every perſon was in good health, and

my ſiſter in charming ſpirits. He was too kind, too conſiderate, to aſk any queſtions, and I had ſeen enough to prevent me from going through the contents at that time. I put the letter into my pocket.—"This will amuſe me in the evening: I will enjoy the proſpects now."

My dear father had purpoſely gone through York, that I might ſee the city, which I think has an air of gloomy grandeur, from the ſilence that pervades it; at ſome ſeaſons, the aſſizes and races, I am told the city is crowded with faſhionable people, but now the ſtreets are dull and deſerted.

Alas! my ſiſter, fain would I trifle, and write of indifferent matters, that I may not frighten you by my gravity from continuing your correſpondence and confidence; but my mind is too deeply diſtreſſed to enter upon deſcriptive ſubjects; nor, ſince the peruſal of your letter, have I been capable of receiving pleaſure from any paſſing objects,

or

or enjoying as I expected ſome of the moſt romantic ſcenes in nature. Every moment was an age until we arrived at Berwick, and with eager haſte I diſpatched a ſervant to the poſt-office. Your ſecond letter had that day arrived: I ſaw my earneſtneſs attracted my father's notice.

"How greatly does abſence endear our friends? (ſaid I.) Till now I never knew the value of letters."

"I am pleaſed with Caroline's punctuality, (returned my father.) A ſeparation from a friend and ſiſter, and the frivolity ſhe will meet with in the gay world, will I hope teach her to value the affection and ſincerity of her own connexions."

I retired as ſoon as poſſible to examine the packet, in the weak expectation that the ſecond letter would counteract the poiſon of the firſt. Well may I call it poiſon, when it has diſordered both my mind and body.

O Caroline!

O Caroline! what intelligence have you communicated?—how have you degraded your own character? What is Sir James Nicholls to Lady Gaywit?—How do his attentions or amours concern her? Is ſhe not married to the man of her choice?—Is ſhe not elevated to a rank in life that ought to hold out an example of diſcretion and imitation to others?—Will a playful gaiety of heart be accepted as an apology for errors and indiſcretions that violate decorum, leſſen her own conſequence, and is degrading to her huſband? My dear ſiſter, ſtop where you are; undeceive yourſelf;—it is not admiration you excite; it is a ſentiment, a preſumptuous hope, that ought to humble you in your own eyes, as it muſt lower you in the eſteem of others. How can you, who ſee the improper and ridiculous conduct of Lady Penrickard in its true light, be blind to the glaring impropriety of your *own* actions? Does the difference of a very few years (for her ladyſhip is ſtill a young woman) ſanction follies

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in one which are diſguſting in another?—ſurely not. Your reaſon cannot be ſo hoodwinked as to believe it; and, for my part, I think the levity of the younger woman much more unpardonable.

But little acquainted with the world, married beyond her hopes, introduced into a new family, at an age when modeſty and delicacy ought to be the guardians of every word and action, her manners ſhould inſpire reſpect and eſteem; her conduct ſhould be irreproachable, or ſhe will give juſt cauſe for concluſions that ought to make her die with ſhame and confuſion: ſhe will be ſuppoſed to have a natural *depravity of heart*, that, at ſo early a period of life, can adopt the coquetry and follies too prevalent in faſhionable women from a long acquaintance with the town, whom diſſipation and pernicious examples have gradually ſeduced from the paths of diſcretion. A young woman of eighteen, to leap over every barrier of female modeſty at once, is a creature

ſo

ſo contemptible, that ſhe is even beneath pity.

Call me not *preciſe*, my dear ſiſter. Your wit and good-humour I admire, when tempered with a little judgment: I am not *grave* in the diſagreeable ſenſe of the word, for I love cheerful people and animated parties. I ſhall like to hear that my ſiſter in the gay world is *admired*, ſo that the admiration ſtops not at her face, but that her manners have their full ſhare in the applauſe, and that eſteem and reſpect are attached to the approbation her beauty may inſpire.—Check then the playfulneſs of your temper, dear Caroline; conſider what you owe to your lord, yourſelf, and your family. You have in your own connexions ſeen the ill-conſequences of indulging vanity, and other frivolous attachments, in the characters you have before you; you can diſtinguiſh folly and improprieties: give yourſelf but time for reflection, and my ſiſter will have no cauſe to fear "an averted eye," an "oblique ſneer,"

ſneer," or the "bluſh" of Lord Gaywit at a ſuppoſed indiſcretion in his wife.

I thank you for the characters you have drawn of your gueſts. The avaricious man is truly an unhappy being; his days and nights are paſſed in wretchedneſs, and muſt conclude in miſery and ſorrow. Your elderly *miſs*, in her ſolitary grandeur, may find ſome compenſation for loſt beauty and conſequence, and hold out a leſſon to other females, to beware of rating their perſonal charms and attainments too highly, when new beauties daily ſpring up to leſſen their attractions, and when *novelty* is of itſelf a ſufficient charm in the eyes of moſt men to draw their attentions. Lord Scamper is too inſignificant to invite obſervation,—a common character. Sir William Allen I am inclined to think favourably of, and wiſh he may ſucceed with Lady Almeria.

Tell Miſs Penrickard, that, if a correſpondence with a perſon unknown, who has been partially repreſented to her, whoſe only boaſt

boaſt is truth and ſincerity, can afford her the leaſt ſatisfaction, I ſhall feel myſelf moſt favoured by the indulgence.——I have had no hair-breadth eſcapes or adventures, no lovers to purſue, no valiant knights to guard me; but have been ſuffered to paſs very quietly through the country, "unknowing and unknown." We purpoſe going to Glaſgow, and if we meet with a pleaſant cottage in its vicinity, to fix there for ſome time. To leave our country and connexions, to reſide with ſtrangers, on a circumſcribed income, oppreſſed with the rememberance of many ſad events, by moſt perſons may be thought a wild and an abſurd ſcheme; but thoſe that wonder, or cenſure, know not our motives: my father wiſhes to fly from every ſcene that may remind him of loſt happineſs. Parental attention is not now abſolutely neceſſary for Frederic; and, though few men have leſs pride, or can more eaſily reſign perſonal gratifications, yet human nature is the ſame in every breaſt. He can ſubmit to retrench every ſuperfluity,

to

to live within the narrow bounds of his limited income, without regret, when free from the obſervation of his former acquaintance; but he could not ſupport ill-natured reflections, nor the contemptuous ſlights of the illiberal world, nor appear in a ſituation degrading to Lord and Lady Gaywit. And for myſelf, I am neither without feeling nor pride; the firſt is gratified in being the companion, the ſoother of my father's ſorrows; and the latter is preſerved from mortification by withdrawing from the narrow-minded and ill-judging multitude, whoſe venal praiſes are attached only to the proſperous and happy. In the retirement we ſeek, we ſhall appear as we are, poſſeſſed of a very moderate income, and reſolved to live within it. We have *enough* for the comforts of life, but *nothing* for its ſuperfluities: we ſhall attract no notice, — we ſhall ſeek no acquaintance; and I thank heaven that I have reſources within myſelf that will enable me to paſs the hours of ſolitude both pleaſantly and profitably. I ſhall acquire wiſdom, patience, and fortitude.

From

From this account my dear ſiſter will ſee that it is impoſſible I ſhould be an entertaining correſpondent. On the article of amuſement, I muſt be greatly your debtor; on the ſide of affection and ſiſterly love, I will not yield the ſuperiority. To *that account*, my dear Caroline, place the contents of this letter: read it not lightly, but let it co-operate with your own reaſon to influence your conduct in the purſuits of honour, happineſs, and real admiration.—Our father ſends his bleſſing and affectionate remembrances to yourſelf and Lord Gaywit. Believe me ever

Your true friend and ſiſter,

MARY BOYLE.

LETTER

LETTER XVIII.

MISS BOYLE TO MRS. ROWE.

Dear and revered Friend,

HOW kind, how conſoling, was your laſt letter! Believe me, it had the effects the beloved writer deſigned. It inſpired exultation, and the delightful conſciouſneſs of ſelf-approbation, confirmed by the beſt of women. Can my happineſs admit of any addition, now that my father's health and ſpirits ſeem to be greatly reſtored?—Alas! yes. In the words of an elegant writer, I feel "that, in the midſt of happineſs, the ſighing heart will remind

us

us of its imperfection." One corroding care ſtill rankles in my boſom, and *there* muſt rankle; for, unleſs circumſtances change, not *even to you* can I communicate the cauſe. I have done wrong to mention it; I entreat you to obliterate the incautious folly from your memory.——I fly to other ſubjects.

Three days ſince we arrived at Glaſgow. Yeſterday we rambled through the city, and were quite charmed with irs ſituation, its buildings, and cleanlineſs. Conſidering we are ſtrangers, without ſervants or equipage to give conſequence, we have met with much civility, and were accommodated the firſt night of our arrival with very decent apartments, in a private houſe. As I mentioned my intention of writing to you this morning, my kind father is gone alone round the environs of the city, on horſeback, to look out for a habitation that may ſuit the two emigrants.

The

The ſituation of Glaſgow is uncommonly beautiful: it is built on a gentle declivity, gradually ſloping towards the river, which affords a proſpect of large ſhips, that, continually changing, proves the extenſive commerce carried on in this buſy city.—The new houſes are large, regular, and elegant, four and five ſtories high, the beſt of them ſupported by arcades, which have a very magnificent appearance.

But why ſhould I attempt to deſcribe a city already pourtrayed by abler pens than mine? You have before now read every thing that can be ſaid on the ſubject, I ſhall content myſelf therefore with aſſuring you that deſcription has not outſtepped the bounds of truth, and that I prefer Glaſgow to Edinburgh, though *that* is certainly in the line of improvement, and may, from the plans already begun to be put into execution, in a few years become a beautiful city. We reſted only two days in it, and the whole of our time was ſo taken up with running about, that I had not a ſingle hour

hour to devote to my favourite employment of writing; and on the road I found myſelf too much fatigued either to receive or give pleaſure by my pen.

One circumſtance let me not forget to acquaint you with, knowing that the intereſt you take in our affairs will render it acceptable. Before my father quitted Hertfordſhire, Mr. Abbot, his ſolicitor, told him of an excellent opportunity to lay out three thouſand pounds to much advantage. Happy in the proſpect of adding to the income of my beloved father, I readily joined in empowering Mr. Abbot, who is a very worthy character, to transfer that ſum from the bank, for the beneficial purpoſe he mentioned. The intereſt will be upwards of ſixty pounds a year difference in our favour, which is a conſiderable object to us at preſent; and I confeſs to you, my dear Mrs. Rowe, that, although I ſigh not for grandeur, nor am ambitious of riches, yet neither am I ſo abſtracted as not

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to be deſirous of a competence that may afford us a few indulgencies, preſerve us from contempt, and leave a little for the wants of others, more preſſing than our own.

Apropos to the latter, let me tell you that, before we began our journey, we received a moſt affectionate letter from Mr. Cranfield, who has conſented to accompany his brother into Italy, for the reſtoration of his health, which the former is apprehenſive is on the decline. He again repeats every kind offer, and ſays he has left an order with his banker to honour whatever bills my father may draw on him. Moſt uncommon generoſity and confidence ſurely! who could abuſe it?—Not Mr. *Boyle*, I am perſuaded; and, thank heaven, we ſhall have no temptation. The depoſit placed in my hands for the relief of the unfortunate is ſtill untouched. When we become ſtationary, there is little doubt but that, in this world of affliction, I ſhall meet with many who have claims to it.

You are ſurpriſed I omitted to mention my ſiſter in the laſt letter I ſent. I am aſhamed of the neglect: ſhe is well and happy, at Stanton-Place Hill,—a great favourite with the Earl, a circumſtance that gives me much pleaſure, as the marriage at firſt was rather *acceded to* than exactly correſpondent to his *wiſhes*. She writes to me very punctually.

You think that ſhe muſt be unhappy in the reflection that "ſo much having been done for *her*, has occaſioned the embarraſſments and conſequent retirement of her father and ſiſter." I cannot anſwer for her *feelings*, but we are particularly cautious *not* to *hurt* them by the ſlighteſt word that may be tranſlated into a reflection on *her*. It would be cruel to diſturb her happineſs, and we are perfectly content.

My father is juſt returned, and I muſt conclude. Addreſs your letters to me at Mr. Macniel's, Banker, in Glaſgow, on whom my father has letters of credit, and

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the only one here that knows any thing of us.

Adieu, dear Mrs. Rowe; my beſt wiſhes are ever

Your's,

MARY BOYLE.

LETTER XIX.

LADY GAYWIT TO MISS BOYLE.

MY firſt letter, dear Mary, has by this time reached your hands, and methinks I ſee my pretty ſiſter ſhaking her wiſe head at the giddy Caroline. What then will you ſay to the ſecond, which meets you at Berwick? I expect a volume of advice, and a ſtring of proverbs: like Sancho

Panza, you will retail the wiſdom of nations againſt me, and raiſe a hoſt of terrible prognoſtics for future puniſhment.

With all the conſequences before my eyes, I cannot reſiſt writing to you, and placing weapons in your hands againſt myſelf. You muſt at leaſt allow I have more frankneſs and generoſity than half my ſex, unleſs you ſuppoſe the want of a confidante, and an eager deſire of being communicative, urge me to this deſperate deed: but I truſt my dear Mary will lean to the favourable ſide of the queſtion, and in that confidence I ſhall purſue the narrative of my proceedings, which really begin to be intereſting.

I concluded my laſt letter with telling you that I had ſent poor Lady Pen to her dreſſing-room, from whence ſhe would not emerge, nor was again viſible for the evening. I ſaw Miſs Babbington was dying with curioſity; ſhe condeſcended to be very gracious to me, and hoped "we ſhould be good neighbours, the diſtance being only

ſeven

ſeven miles, an hour's ride, which, in a morning, would be of infinite ſervice to my health." I bowed to her compliment, and promiſed to call on her very ſoon. Lord Scamper then advanced, telling me he had the prettieſt hunting-ſeat in the *kingdom*, and the fineſt horſes in the *world*; he hoped to have the honour of ſhowing both to me.

"Your lordſhip ſhould marry, (ſaid the Earl,) then you might expect the ladies would viſit you."

"The favour would be purchaſed too dearly, (replied he, with a loud laugh,) if at the expence of my liberty. No, no, my lord, I like the dear creatures extremely well, but curſe me if ever I ſacrifice Harlequin, White Legs, and Cleopatra, to any woman in the kingdom."

"Fye, Scamper, (cried Gaywit,) what a declaration before the ladies!—Upon my word, you grow quite ſavage."

"No! (exclaimed he, laughing ſtill louder,) it is becauſe I do not chooſe to be *a ſavage*, that I diſclaim matrimony."

"A truce, if you pleaſe, my lord, to ſuch converſation, (ſaid aunt Nell, bridling,) which neither ſhews your wit nor good-breeding."

"His lordſhip only means to ſhew his pleaſantry, (added *Miſs* Babbington, with a gracious ſmile,) he is never deficient in politeneſs."

"Upon my ſoul (cried he, with a careleſs bow,) I am indebted for your good opinion, madam; but I fear, as you know me better, I ſhall prove leſs deſerving of it."

This was ſaid rather pointedly, and made the elderly Miſs bluſh, for it ſeems he is no ſtranger to the ſnares ſhe has laid to entrap him, but hitherto his paſſion for "Harlequin," and his companions, have preſerved him from falling into her net.

Sir William Allen had at table engaged the family-party to dine with him at Holwell-Mount next Friday. All, except the Earl, (who is not well enough to venture out,) and

and Lady Almeria, accepted the invitation. Her ladyſhip "could not be wanting in her attendance on her father, particularly as he would be deprived of his agreeable friends." I give her all due credit for her attachment to the Earl, but the real objection was too obvious from the coolneſs ſo viſible in her behaviour to Sir William, and I am ſure he underſtood it but too well.

After our gueſts were departed, wiſhing to pay court a little to dame Eleanor, I ſaid to her apart, "I am ſorry to obſerve Lady Almeria does not like Sir William."

"So am I, (retorted ſhe, in a quick tone;) there is a gentleman in this houſe made of too much conſequence. Before his arrival, Almeria was gay, and rather too lively. Her indifference to Sir William appeared to ſpring from a ſpirit of coquetry more than from any ſerious diſinclination; but, ſince the arrival of Sir James Nicholls, (added ſhe, fixing her ſharp grey eyes upon

my face,) there is a marked alteration in her perſon and diſpoſition."

"Of that *I* am not a judge, as the alteration muſt have taken place before my arrival."

"Not entirely, (replied ſhe;) but, before *you* came to Stanton-Place, this Sir James paid much greater attention than I wiſhed for to the poor girl, who, I fear, gave him credit for more honour and ſincerity than he poſſeſſes. It is a horrid thing that the world is grown ſo depraved, young girls thinking of lovers when they had better be in their nurſery, from which, in *my days*, they never came but under a parent's wing, till a ſuitable match was *choſen for them*, or they were arrived at years of diſcretion.—The folly of the preſent day, in throwing children into the world when ſcarcely from their leading ſtrings, makes ſo many forward ridiculous miſſes and ſo many imprudent wives, who outrage decency by their flirtations with the men; and, whether they are indulgent miſtreſſes, or "*mercileſs tyrants*,"

tyrants," act with the greateſt impropriety."

To my infinite relief, we were interrupted, for the old girl had given me a choak-pear. It is plain ſhe heard the exclamation of Sir James to me in the ſhrubbery, and was not pleaſed there ſhould be a ſecret between us ſhe could not comprehend.

The next morning I accompanied Lady Almeria to Lady Pen's dreſſing-room. We found her juſt ready to make her appearance, perfectly recovered both in health and ſpirits: there was a compoſure in the latter, and a civility in her addreſs to me that was aſtoniſhing;—ſhe muſt be a conſummate hypocrite.

She accompanied us to Mrs. Grantham: this delicate *fair* one was ſtill extremely diſcompoſed, and mentioned her intention of going to Bath very ſhortly.—Poor Lady Dainty!—a ſtrange whim her's, to marry an old man for his money; and, inſtead of

enjoying his fortune with ſpirit, ſpends her days in fruitleſs endeavours to attract notice by extreme delicacy and weak nerves. Here ſhe is unfortunately overlooked, but in the faſhionable reſort of invalids, ſhe may be ſucceſsful.

All this day paſſed in great harmony; muſic and cards were our amuſements, for the day proved too wet for riding or walking. In the evening, Sir James and myſelf were by accident cut out, and left to entertain each other. I rallied him upon the circumſtances of the preceding day, and he thought proper to make a merit of obliging me at the expence of Lady Pen, whoſe eyes were continually turned towards us; and, to mortify her, I affected to whiſper, and gave myſelf a thouſand conſequential airs.

Her inattention to her cards, and her partner's reproaches, drew univerſal obſervation, and, following the direction of her eyes, we attracted general notice. On this I aroſe, and,

and, walking to one of the tables, leaned over the back of Lord Gaywit's chair, who had juſt loſt a game.

"You had ſhocking cards, my lord; you have not ſtaked high, I hope."

"*I fear I have*, (anſwered he, looking expreſſively at me,) and that I am playing a loſing game."

"Fie, my lord! (exclaimed Mrs. Grantham, who was his partner,) you are not ſerious ſurely: the trifle we play for cannot be deemed a high ſtake, or excite hopes or fears at the event."

"True, madam, (replied he;) but when we are intereſted for the honour of a victory, the trifle becomes of ſome conſequence."

"Nonſenſe! (cried ſhe.) If you are ſo mighty tenacious of conqueſt, I ſhall regret that I am your partner, leſt I ſhould be blamed for the conſequences."

"Indeed, madam, not the ſmalleſt blame will be attached to you; it reſts wholly with myſelf, for I begin to think I play my cards very ill."

The cards being dealt, no more was ſaid, and I removed to another ſtation. The foregoing dialogue was perfectly underſtood by me, and certainly the obſervation of aunt Nell has made the fooliſh fellow jealous. At ſupper, chance placed Mr. Gardner next to me, and I began to play off a few airs and graces upon him. He had the inſolence to whiſper me, "It won't do, Lady Gaywit; the covering is too flimſy." I gave him ſuch a look of contempt, as ſilenced him for the evening, which paſſed altogether in a kind of ſnap-dragon way, talking at each other.

When we retired, Lord Gaywit took it in his head to be very grave, and, as I never like to break in upon people's humours, I left him to indulge his taciturnity as long as he pleaſed. This morning he was all tenderneſs, and propoſed to take an airing with me. *I*, like a condeſcending wife, complied: his ſiſter, Maria, and Mr. Gardner accompanied us. To the latter I wore

wore an air of ſcornful civility, and my attentions being divided between Gaywit and Almeria, the love-ſtricken Maria had him all to herſelf.

But the mortifying circumſtance was, that Sir James was left at home with that odious Lady Pen, and at dinner ſhe looked ſo pleaſed, ſo happy, and ſo ugly, that I could have killed her with my eyes, had they the power ſo often aſcribed to them.—I have now left the whole party to ſcribble thus far; but, to ſay truth, am ſo horridly out of humour, that I muſt take a little ramble in the garden to recover my ſerenity, before I can make my appearance in the drawing-room to any advantage.

Not a line could I write laſt night; but without preface haſten now to the events of the evening. I broke from my pen, and ſauntered into the garden, had a tranſient view of aunt Nell and Almeria turning into a little ſummer-houſe; curioſity carried me round that way, and, hearing my name mentioned,

mentioned, muſt excuſe my *lingering* near it. The following converſation reached my ears.

"Indeed, madam, (ſaid Almeria,) I have no *averſion* to Sir William, but I feel no preference for him; neither have I any inclination to be bound for life, when I have but juſt began my career, and can ſo little anſwer for my ſentiments."

"To be ſure, (anſwered the formal maiden,) you are young enough yet to fix for life; and in my time, girls like you would have been ſtill in the nurſery; (Almeria is *nineteen*, obſerve;) but this age is ſo forward and ſo depraved, that, as you *are* thruſt into the world, the ſooner you are united to a worthy man the better."

"It *cannot* be to Sir William Allen, (ſaid Almeria;) and I wiſh, madam, you would tell my father that I eſteem him as a friend, but I never can love him."

"And who do you love better? Ah! niece, niece, that bluſh betrays you; that artful

artful deſigning Sir James Nicholls has ſtolen into your heart; you are no longer what you were. Once too gay and frivolous, now your ſpirits and vivacity are fled!—that inſiduous man has undermined your peace, and will ſhipwreck your happineſs, unleſs prudence and pride come to your reſcue."

"I hope, (anſwered Almeria, in a ſpirited tone,) I have ſufficient of both to guard my peace from the arts of any man, and you muſt obſerve there is very little communication between me and the gentleman you mention."

"Yes; and I obſerve alſo, that his attentions elſewhere render you thus ſpiritleſs and drooping: it is in vain to deny it.—But he is a worthleſs character to purſue married women. I declare the behaviour of Lady Penrickard is quite ſhocking, and, though you admired juſt now the playful vivacity of Lady Gaywit, I muſt tell you that *I* do not think quite ſo well of her.—I was quite ſhocked yeſterday at things I obſerved.

obſerved. In ſhort, child, Sir James is I am ſure a wicked dangerous man, and your brother had better take his wife from hence, if the other does not ſhorten his viſit. He that ſeeks to gain the attention of married women muſt be worthleſs, and thoſe indiſcreet creatures who flirt with him injure their huſbands, and will ſoon become contemptible. If I ſee much more, I ſhall ſpeak very plain to your ſiſter, whether ſhe likes it or not: but be aſſured that Sir James is a male coquet, whoſe vanity is gratified by gaining the affections of women, and then neglecting them."

"Dear aunt, (cried Almeria,) you judge too ſeverely, but Sir James is nothing to me."

"So much the better, if you ſpeak truth: Open your eyes then to the merits of Sir William, and you will ſoon judge more favourably of him, and be more inclined to oblige your father."

"To pleaſe my dear father is the firſt wiſh of my heart, but I fear, in this inſtance, it

it would be the ſacrifice of my happineſs for ever, if I complied with his wiſhes."

"Well, well, take time to conſider, child, and weigh the merits of both men fairly."

I walked on, and entered the drawing-room a few minutes before them, where I found Sir James and Lady Pen at Picquet, the others at Whiſt. Lord Gaywit looked at me with no very gracious aſpect. The Earl, who was unemployed, cried out, "My dear daughter, where have you ſecluded yourſelf from us ſo long?"

"In my dreſſing-room, writing to my ſiſter, my lord."

"Aye, I am told that ſiſter of your's is a moſt agreeable ſenſible young woman."

"You have been juſtly informed. I wiſh I was half as good as my dear Mary."

"*I* wiſh ſo too," ſaid Lord Gaywit, abruptly.

"Nay, my lord, that is not quite ſo polite on your ſide: in *your* eyes I ought to be

be the moſt lovely, beſt, and diſcreeteſt, of my ſex."

"You have the power to render my ſentiments exactly conformable to your wiſhes," ſaid he, with an expreſſive look, which I did not chooſe to comprehend; and therefore, tapping him on the ſhoulder, with an aſſumed ſmile, "Thank ye, my lord; then be aſſured thoſe ſentiments ſhall always be in my favour?"

The entrance of dame Nell (for, as ſhe intends to be a ſpy upon me, I will no longer call her *aunt,*) with Almeria, changed the converſation, and ſoon after broke up the card-parties. After ſupper I was called upon to ſing; I poſitively refuſed, unleſs Lady Pen would ſet the example; (by the bye, ſhe ſcreams like an owl.) Every one joined in the entreaty; Sir James particularly. At length, with an affected confuſion and timidity, ſhe complied, and I gave a look at Sir James, that almoſt ſet him in a fit of laughter: an aſſumed cough and his handkerchief

handkerchief ſaved the unſeaſonable emotion, and, when ſhe finiſhed, he was moſt laviſh in his praiſes. I readily obeyed the general call, and never ſung better in my life. My eyes I believe ſpoke my triumph, for poor Lady Pen was quite à la mort, and viſibly diſpleaſed at the compliments I received.

When we retired, Lord Gaywit ſaid a thouſand pretty things, but concluded, with a deep ſigh, "You have metamorphoſed a lively rattling fellow into a ſober doating huſband, my dear Caroline. Would to heaven I could ſee you equally attached!"

"What! would you wiſh to ſee me a poor tame ſpiritleſs thing, running after its dearee, playing the fool, hopping like the fond dove round its mate, and become the ſtanding jeſt of the multitude, by retiring to purling brooks and ſhady groves, there in ſoft murmurs liſp our never dying paſſion to the wilds, and "All for Love,

or

or the World well loſt," be our determined motto?—Delicious ſcheme!"

"No, (replied he, ſpiritedly,) no!—I would neither become ridiculous myſelf, nor have my wife a theme for invidious obſervations; but I would have her ſuperior to the frivolity of the world, and not aſhamed of ſhewing in public that preference to the man of her choice which might give him credit, and do honour to herſelf. Fondneſs is ſometimes ridiculous, but a tenderneſs of manner more than words,—a delicacy in her conduct, that not a ſhadow of doubt may be entertained that her huſband occupies the firſt place in her heart and eſteem,—ſhould certainly mark the behaviour of an affectionate and prudent wife."

"Upon my word, (ſaid I, interrupting him,) a very fine oration upon the duties of a wife, and your lordſhip ſeems to have undergone a great transformation. The magic has not yet affected me; all in good time,

time, I ſuppoſe. Till then, my lord, content yourſelf with bearing a little longer my vivacity and indulgence of thoſe ſpirits *once* ſo captivating, but which I find you now expect to be changed for a *grave*, ſober, hum-drum, ſilence, becoming an old married woman. Well, I will endeavour to practiſe the leſſon, and, when in company with my *huſband*, look as demure and preciſe as your old aunt, and reſerve my gaiety for my *friends* in your abſence."

I ſhall not repeat his anſwer. We had at laſt a downright ſerious quarrel, which ended, as it ought, in my triumph, and his acknowledgment of my power, beauty, goodneſs, and ſo forth.

I am determined to keep it up, and not relax in my authority, nor abate in my uſual ſpirits or flirtations. Now or never is the time to conquer, and eſtabliſh my reign over ſuch huſband-like airs. I ſee he dotes on me, and in a ſhort time will become the tame fond animal he wanted to make

make his wife; but, I thank heaven, I am not made of ſuch weak materials: I can love quite enough, without conſuming my conſequence, or loſing ſight of the "rights of women."

This morning he was all tenderneſs, and I behaved very prettily. Could you have thought my wiſe ſiſter that the lively laughing Gaywit would have changed thus ſuddenly? I'll be hanged if that formal ſentimental Gardner has not infected him with ſome of his antediluvian notions. I have been ſtrangely miſtaken in that gentleman; I thought he was humbled into a downright lover, but this morning, meeting him in the breakfaſt-parlour, and rallying him upon his gravity, which I ſuppoſed my "divine charms" had occaſioned, the puritanical creature had the aſſurance to ſay "his anxiety for the *peace* of Lord Gaywit threw a gloom over his mind, which my ladyſhip alone had the power to diſperſe;" and then, bowing abruptly, left me to tranſlate his meaning as I pleaſed.

Pretty

Pretty doings theſe, to have a ſentimental friend a ſpy upon my conduct! I, like a good-natured fool, thought his attentions, ſoft looks, and dancing after me like a ſhadow, were the effect of my attractions: but it ſeems the "*peace* of Lord Gaywit" impelled him to watch his wife.——Very well, Mr. Officious, I ſhall ſoon do your buſineſs: Stanton-Place ſhall not boaſt of me for its inmate much longer; and, when I am in my own houſe, no ſuch *friendly* obſerver ſhall be my gueſt.

Adieu, my dear Mary; you ſee I have much buſineſs on my hands. I hourly expect to hear where my next letter may find you: this goes to Berwick. To our father preſent my beſt duty, and believe me ſincerely

Your's,

C. M. GAYWIT.

LETTER XX.

MISS BOYLE TO MRS. ROWE.

TEN days have paſſed, my beloved friend, ſince I wrote to you, in which time I have been a daring adventurer; nothing leſs, I aſſure you, than a voyager.

When I cloſed my laſt letter, my father was juſt returned from his excurſion, and brought with him Mr. Macniel, our banker, to whoſe kindneſs and hoſpitality we have many obligations. He ſpent the evening with us, and, having all the nationality of a Scotchman, deſcanted much on the beauties and antiquity of his country. Among other

other things, he expatiated largely on the wild grandeur of the ſcenes in the Iſle of Arran, in the ſhire of Bute. My father liſtened to him with earneſt attention, and expreſt a wiſh to ſee this boaſted ſpot.—Upon which Mr. Macniel offered to accompany him, the following day, in a little coaſting voyage, for a few days, as his ſon and partner were perfectly competent to manage the buſineſs in his abſence.

My father gratefully accepted the offer, and perſuaded me alſo to accede to it. As I knew it was impoſſible for him to leave me, my wiſh, to gratify and oblige a parent ſo dear to me, ſilenced, if it did not conquer, my fooliſh objections to the water, and without the leaſt heſitation I agreed to be of the party; a Miſs Macintire, a niece of our friend, was promiſed to be my companion.

The next day Mr. Macniel introduced the lady, an agreeable pleaſant woman,

about four and thirty. A veſſel was hired for the purpoſe, and we embarked. I am not ſufficiently acquainted with nautical matters to deſcribe our voyage in proper terms. Hills, dales, villages, and bays, we paſſed innumerable. On one ſide we ſaw towers enveloped by woods; on another, the ruins of a caſtle; then ſcattered villages; then the hills of Cowal, beautifully ſloping to the water's edge, varied with woods and corn-lands; and at a diſtance, almoſt to the uttermoſt ſtretch of view, we ſaw the ſtupendous mountains of Arran riſing to the clouds. Nothing could exceed the beauty of this voyage; my mind partook of the harmony around me, and my "boſom's lord ſat lightly on its throne."

Our firſt courſe was directed to the Iſle of Bute, where we landed, and walked up to Mount-Stewart, which is a very handſome modern houſe, the ſituation beautiful, in the midſt of a wood, on a high ground, the

the trees lofty and flouriſhing. After viewing this cultivated ſpot, we proceeded on our voyage, landing at ſeveral places to examine every thing worth notice, a deſcription of which I am not equal to, and could afford you but little amuſement in the detail.

After three days coaſting, we arrived at Loch-Ranga, a fine open bay, and landed on the Iſle of Arran. The approach to it was ſublime and beautiful,—a fine bay in front, with a deſolated caſtle on a projecting neck of land; beyond, a little fertile plain, watered by a ſtream, with a ſmall village; the whole ſurrounded by mountains of an immenſe height.—The ſcenery was truly romantic.

I was extremely deſirous of viſiting the caſtle. It is ſaid it was once the ſeat of royalty, but now mouldering into ruins. Little remains to gratify curioſity: there is a hall, and three or four apartments; and

at the bottom of one of the ſquares, (for the caſtle conſiſts of two,) was a vaſt cavern, which moſt probably was a dungeon, in which unhappy priſoners were let down, there to periſh, according to the barbarous cuſtom of former times. One room had an immenſe large chimney, and being more habitable than the other part, ſeemed by ſome fragments and ſhells to ſerve as an occaſional retreat for poor fiſhermen, or ſuch like perſons.

We walked through a wood of ſmall trees, and aſcended a hill. We came to a decent cottage; an elderly man and his wife received us with great hoſpitality, and gave us much better fare, and more intelligent information than we could have expected.

We paſſed two days in rambling round this iſland, and I was quite charmed with the variety of ſcenes, ſome beautiful, others terrific, which alternately preſented themſelves,

ſelves; as you moved from Eaſt to Weſt.—We met with many monumental ſtones, which ſeemed to be the reliques of Druidiſm, and our kind hoſt told us ſeveral traditional ſtories of the celebrated Fingal, who is ſaid to have hunted here.

In ſhort, my dear Mrs. Rowe, we were eight days on this pleaſant excurſion, which afforded us the higheſt gratification, and tended greatly to exhilerate my father's ſpirits, by the novelty of every thing around us. Yeſterday we took poſſeſſion of a delightful ſmall houſe on the banks of the Clyde; for the accommodations we are indebted to our obliging friend. Here we ſeem to breathe an air of tranquillity; and, if happineſs can be derived from local circumſtances, I flatter myſelf we ſhall partake of its influence.

Miſs Macintire, my fellow-traveller, is an amiable woman; cheerful, but not gay; her natural vivacity received a ſevere check near

ten years ſince, by the premature death of a gentleman ſhe was engaged to marry: he was thrown from his horſe, and killed on the ſpot.

Tenderly faithful to his memory, ſhe has refuſed ſome advantageous offers, and without making any vows, is, I believe, reſolved to remain ſingle. She lives with her uncle, and preſides over his houſhold, has a handſome independent fortune, which is rendered, by her benevolence, a bleſſing to others. Fortunately for me, I have the honour of poſſeſſing her good opinion; my diſpoſition is ſimilar with her's. She is aſtoniſhed to find ſo very young a woman with ſo little inclination to gaiety, and ſo deſirous of information. From her knowledge I hope to derive improvement, for the Scotch are certainly very intelligent people.

We have had letters from our beloved Frederic, very ſatisfactory as to his ſituation; and

and this moment one is brought to me from my ſiſter, who, by the poſt-mark, is, I ſee, ſtill at Stanton-Place.

Adieu, my worthy friend. Believe that your letters afford me the greateſt pleaſure, and then I know your kindneſs will not ſhrink from a taſk that gratifies another.—My father's affectionate remembrances accompany's the beſt wiſhes of

Your obliged friend,

MARY BOYLE.

LETTER XXI.

LORD GAYWIT TO MISS BOYLE.

PARDON me, my dear Miſs Boyle, for thus breaking in upon you, for diſturbing your peace, and wounding your feelings, by a recital of my anxieties. Be not, however, too much alarmed; your ſiſter is well,—but I am unhappy; perhaps I may be wrong; let your gentle mind counſel and direct me, I will implicitly ſubmit to it.

When firſt I knew your charming ſiſter, I was a gay volatile fellow, too indolent to ſeek after improvement, and too well ſatisfied with

with myſelf, and the reception I met with from the world, to think intellectual knowledge of much conſequence. Till I ſaw my Caroline, I knew not that I had a *heart*, for ſhe was the only one that I admired beyond the paſſing moment. Fortunately, as I thought, ſhe honoured me with a declared partiality in my favour, and, after ſome obſtacles, (obſtacles never ſtarted by me,) we were united.

Every hour has increaſed my love; that delightful paſſion has given me a new ſoul. Conſcious of my deficiencies, I have ſought in my father's library to recover the time I have negligently ſpent, and acquire that information I was formerly little deſirous to obtain. My wife has been the ſtimulus to lead me into knowledge, to make myſelf reſpectable in her eyes,—the firſt wiſh of my heart.——But you will think I am writing my own eulogium;—yet, it is neceſſary I ſhould do myſelf juſtice. Alas! my amiable ſiſter, I can no longer be de-

ceived, no longer exult in the affection of my too-charming Caroline.

Within ſix days after our arrival here, the veil was withdrawn which vanity had thrown over my eyes. Sir James Nicholls engroſſes every attentive look, every obliging word. I endeavoured to diſbelieve my ſenſes, and the obſervations of others: I ſought by redoubled tenderneſs to pleaſe the object of my deareſt affections. My aſſiduities were repulſed with peeviſhneſs, my fondneſs with ridicule. I then tried if the moſt gentle admonitions would have any effect; they were received with ſcorn and ill-humour. I am aſhamed to confeſs, even to you, that a ſerious diſpute enſued, in which ſhe was the conqueror, for I could not ſupport her coldneſs and diſpleaſure.—She *ſees* her power, and like a mercileſs tyrant makes me *feel* it.

For many days paſt, things have grown to a great height,—there appears ſo much intelligence between her and Sir James, that it

it attracts the attention of the whole party. Unwilling to throw the ſlighteſt ſpot or ſuſpicion on her reputation, by taking notice of her very reprehenſible conduct, I affect a pleaſantry far from my heart, and behave to Sir James with politeneſs, though not with cordiality. Were I to do otherwiſe, to require his abſence, or an explanation of his conduct, I ſhould irreparably wound the fame of my wife, and gratify his vanity.

A painful incident, which fell within my knowledge this morning, (for, indeed, I did not ſeek it,) determined me once more tenderly to hint at the uneaſineſs I felt from her indifference. Her anſwer I cannot repeat; it was cruel and mortifying. Very ſoon after ſhe inſulted my beſt friend in a manner too groſs for even his attachment to me to endure: he leaves us this evening. She accuſed him of making me jealous, and of being a malicious ſpy upon her actions. Poor Gardner! how very unjuſt the accu-

ſation! Not a word to her diſadvantage has ever eſcaped *his* lips,—not a ſigh has been breathed by me, nor even a look that he could interpret as proceeding from an uneaſy mind. Even her treatment of him would have been concealed from me, had ſhe not exultingly boaſted of it to my face, for Gardner pretended letters had called him to town.

Think, my dear ſiſter, what muſt be my feelings! My father adores her: when in his company, ſhe is guarded and circumſpect; but of late ſhe retires much to her dreſſing-room, or rambles alone in the ſhrubbery, always declining my company. The Earl talks of venturing to travel next week. Sir James will no longer be an inmate of our houſe; but what avails that, if I have loſt the affection of my wife? The poſſeſſion of her perſon, the empty title of a huſband, cannot ſatisfy me, without the more valuable poſſeſſion of her heart.

Teach

Teach me, oh! teach me the happy art to obtain that bleſſing: to you I have diſcloſed the anxiety that threatens the entire deſtruction of my happineſs. Counſel me, I beſeech you, my dear Miſs Boyle.—My attentions to her are unremitting, when ſhe will permit them; but my affection is her jeſt, — ſhe laughs at my antediluvian ideas of reciprocal tenderneſs: and wonders any man of faſhion can be ſo outré as to be ſeen dangling after his wife. Point out to me, you who know every movement of her heart, the ſteps I ſhould purſue to recal that tender affection I once fondly thought was unalterably my own. I have ſtrictly obſerved every word and action of mine ſince I became her huſband; I am not conſcious of any impropriety in either: tell me then, I beſeech you, if ſhe has obſerved to you any errors which I may amend, and it ſhall be the pleaſure of my life to be every thing ſhe wiſhes me to be,—either the moſt affectionate of huſbands, or, if her heart be irrecoverably loſt, then

to

to ſpare both her and myſelf from the licentious tongues of the world. I will leave England, that I may not, by an act of juſtice, render our characters the ſport of the malicious, and be ourſelves miſerable for ever.

Let not the worthy Mr. Boyle participate in my vexations. *You*, and *you only*, enjoy my confidence, for I ſaw enough of your amiable diſpoſition to be aſſured that you will ſympathize with me. Farewell, then, my ſiſter, my friend; believe that I am not unworthy of the claims, and haſten to me your kind advice.

GAYWIT.

LETTER

LETTER XXII.

MISS BOYLE TO LORD GAYWIT.

I Need not tell your lordſhip how greatly the letter I have had the honour to receive from you has mortified and diſtreſſed me. Not for worlds would I have ſuch painful intelligence reach the ears of my father; yet I truſt our fears are more alarmed than is neceſſary.

My ſiſter poſſeſſes the moſt lively ſpirits and the moſt playful diſpoſition, but ſurely not a bad heart. Your lordſhip's affection for her is her boaſt and pride: the vanity

you

you have raiſed ſhe wiſhes you to ſupport, by giving her conſequence. A ſmall tincture of coquetry is not uncommon in ſo very young and ſo very lovely a woman as your Caroline. Her gaiety, and the pleaſure of being admired, run away with her prudence *ſometimes*; but it is more the playfulneſs of diſpoſition than the errors of the heart; — be aſſured it is. Did I think otherwiſe, I ſhould be miſerable.

Your lordſhip does me the honour to aſk my advice; it is a delicate affair; but, conſidering things in the point of view you have placed them, I would certainly leave Stanton-Place, and your preſent ſociety, and go to Bath, or ſome public place of amuſement, where variety, on which ſhe dotes, might entirely obliterate any prepoſſeſſions you ſuppoſe ſhe entertains.

For my own part, I attribute the folly of her conduct entirely to vanity and gaiety. Fall in with her humour; do not appear hurt

hurt by her temporary indifference, which I think *aſſumed*, becauſe it is too faſhionable. Seem pleaſed with her vivacity, laugh at her little abſurdities, and *ſometimes* reſtrain thoſe effuſions of tenderneſs, which the capricious heart is not always in a humour to indulge. Keep up *your own* conſequence, at the ſame time that you exalt her's, and, my life for it! this playful tyrant will deſcend from her altitudes.

Indeed, indeed, my lord, I am perſuaded her faults proceed from humour more than from error, yet your letter has given me very ſerious uneaſineſs, becauſe I ſee you are unhappy from the trifling conduct of my ſiſter, which cannot be defended, though it may be forgiven, ſince any degree of levity in a wife is truly reprehenſible. — But, conſider, ſhe is young, gay, admired, and introduced under a character of reſpectability that commands attention and reſpect, which, joined with the admiration a new and lovely object is ſure

to

to excite,—no wonder if, for a time, ſhe is a little intoxicated by adulation, and ſometimes forgetful of what ſhe owes to you and herſelf.

I do not defend her conduct; but I wiſh to do away the moſt unfavourable part of it, by aſſigning the moſt probable cauſes for the effects you lament, and I hope to hear very ſoon that my judgment is founded on reaſon. Let me entreat your lordſhip to ſcan her actions not with a critical eye, nor a too indulgent one; laugh her out of her foibles, and you meet her on her own ground. Let the *ſiſter* be the monitreſs,—the huſband the tender companion of her retired hours, and the agreeable friend when in public. Such, my lord, is the only advice I can give on this very delicate ſubject.

My mind is too much ruffled to enter upon other topics. I had yeſterday a letter from my ſiſter, whoſe communications to me I have reaſon to think are very unreſerved,

and

and *that* I think muſt give *you* pleaſure.—My father is more tranquillized than I could have expected, and we are pleaſantly ſituated.

I have the Honour to remain

Your Lordſhip's affectionate

Siſter and Servant,

MARY BOYLE.

LETTER

LETTER XXIII.

MISS BOYLE TO MRS. ROWE.

ADVERSITY is the touchſtone of virtue, and human prudence too weak to guard againſt the machinations of the wicked, or ſtruggle againſt the diſpenſations of Providence. This preface will arm you with fortitude to hear of the misfortunes which have overwhelmed your friend; not on her own account is ſhe borne down with ſorrow, but for a parent dearer to her than life, who has been her protector and moſt indulgent friend from her earlieſt infancy.

My

My dear Mrs. Rowe, that "man of integrity," as I thought him, Mr. Abbot, my father's ſolicitor, whom we empowered to transfer three thouſand pound ſtock for the purchaſe of an annuity, has received the money from the bank, with other ſums entruſted by perſons in the country to his management, and has quitted the kingdom with the whole. This blow we received yeſterday, in a letter from my brother's truſtee. The effect on my father was dreadful; he ſat transfixed with aſtoniſhment; not a word eſcaped his lips, and the paper fell from his hands.

Alarmed at his ſituation, I forced ſome drops and water down his throat, and bathed his temples, at the ſame time I conveyed the fatal letter into my pocket.—In a few moments he recovered ſpeech and action; he put my hands from him, and averted his head. "Mary, (ſaid he, with a heart-felt ſigh,) I have now completely ruined you. *You* are deſtined to be the victim

victim for all!" Thoſe words, though terrible and ambiguous, relieved me from the moſt terrifying apprehenſions of a much-worſe evil than the loſs of money.

"My dear ſir, (I cried,) your Mary cannot be injured, while ſhe has her dear protector with her."

"Do not (ſaid he, wildly,) drive me to deſpair and madneſs:—I ſay you are undone! The three thouſand pounds we entruſted with a villain are gone,—are loſt for ever! and ninety pounds a year is all that is left of a once-ample fortune to ſupport my child."

"Is *that all* the evil that has befallen us, my father?—then I can bear them cheerfully. You, indeed, muſt feel the want of many comforts, that I regret; but I have long accuſtomed myſelf to expect my falling fortunes, and therefore ſhall not ſhrink now when the blow is given. In this cheap country, ninety pounds a year will be affluence."

Unable

Unable to ſpeak, he threw his arms round me, and wept aloud. The ſcene grew too diſtreſſing for deſcription, and much difficulty had I to calm the tranſports of grief and ſelf-accuſation, which my afflicted parent vented on himſelf. He never cloſed his eye-lids for the night: I heard his deep-fetched ſighs, that wounded my very ſoul, and this morning he joined me, pale, unrefreſhed, and agitated. He viewed me with a ſcrutinizing eye. If my looks were a tranſcript of my heart, only anxiety for his health and peace were depicted there.

Thank heaven! while we ſat at breakfaſt, vainly trying to eat, the good Mr. Macniel came in. He inſtantly perceived all was not right, and his compaſſionate glances ſeemed to demand the cauſe.

I roſe. "Dear ſir, acquaint Mr. Macniel with the intelligence we have received. His advice may relieve the oppreſſion of your mind."

I withdrew, and involuntarily took up my pen to addreſs you.

I will

I will not attempt to impoſe upon you, my good friend, nor appear ſo romantically abſtracted as not to regret the loſs of this money; yet it is for my father I feel, far, far beyond any conſiderations for myſelf. He has been for years ſtruggling with ſorrows; he has felt much pain under the idea that great injuſtice has been done to me, and my ſiſter aggrandized at my expence. A mind, delicate as his, has borne thoſe reflections very hardly, and difficult has been my taſk to over-rule them, and ſubdue the poignancy of ſelf-reproach. — The alluring ſcheme, held out by that baſe man, Abbot, delighted him, becauſe it promiſed ſo large an addition to our income, that I might be able to enjoy many little elegancies I had given up. It was for *my* gratification that he was anxious, and his *motives* demanded my gratitude, be the event what it may.

We cannot look into futurity, nor ſcrutinize the heart of man, which is too often enveloped

enveloped by a ſemblance of virtue, as an artificial covering to a baſe mind; therefore, when reaſon and probability ſanction the cauſe, we are not anſwerable for the event, and I truſt your little pupil will not be a philoſopher in theory only, though the practical part may be attended with ſome difficulties at firſt; one of which will, I think, be a removal from this ſweet ſpot we have juſt taken poſſeſſion of, for our income will not ſupport it.—No matter; content is not confined to local ſituations; the mind muſt carve it out, and I am not faſtidious. Mr. Macniel is gone: I haſten to my father.

My dear Mrs. Rowe, my fortitude is ſubdued: the diſtreſs of my beloved parent is more than I can ſupport. Every attempt of mine to conſole him, every proſpect I hold out of future comfort, only adds to his affliction and regret, becauſe he perſiſts in thinking I have deſerved better fortune, and have been ſacrificed to ſelfiſh,

ambitious projects;—projects which I fear will terminate to little advantage. I proteſt to you that I have never grieved at the diſtinction; but it is in vain I declare this to my father; he either does not, or will not, believe me, or elſe he reflects too ſeverely on himſelf.

He told Mr. Macniel the intelligence we had received, the very narrow income we poſſeſſed, and his reſolution to retire into the North of the country, where he could live on a very comparative ſmall ſum;—but what do you think was the propoſal tacked to this reſolution?—that *I* ſhould leave him, and either return to England, and board in a family, or remain as a boarder with Mr. Macniel, he retaining only twenty pounds a year for his own ſupport.

I never was really grieved till this moment. Could my father think ſo meanly of me as to believe I would leave him?—did he ſuppoſe my affection and duty ſo very light, that, in the hour of trial, when love,

love, duty, gratitude, and every affectionate principle, called upon me to attend, comfort, and cheriſh, him, that I would baſely prefer my own gratification, and *deſert him?* O my dear Mrs. Rowe! you know not how cruelly I was humbled by the ſuppoſition!

I told him, and truly told him, "that if he wiſhed my happineſs, or would raiſe me into conſequence with myſelf, in a belief that I *deſerved* and *poſſeſſed* his affection, he would conſider us as inſeparably united in one intereſt, — as a link in one great chain, which, if broken, could never be repaired; and that as a child I had a claim, if not an abſolute right, to *his* care and protection, and whilſt he lived I ought not to be thrown on the world as a deſerted daughter."

I believe I ſpoke too warmly; I know I ſpoke feelingly, for I was greatly agitated; and the effect it produced on my dear parent I cannot deſcribe: it wounded me to my

very ſoul, and I was obliged to leave him very abruptly. Mr. Macniel propoſed to bring his niece this evening, and my father did not forbid it. I believe I am not ſo good as the partiality of my friends have repreſented me. I feel that I have a proud heart; I am hurt at appearing as an object of pity,—as one whoſe circumſtances are reduced. I ſhall bluſh before Miſs Macintire. — What folly!—I am aſhamed of myſelf, but I cannot conquer my feelings. Do not deſpiſe me; I acknowledge my weakneſs: what I cannot hide from myſelf, I am not ſolicitous to conceal from you, to whom I have no reſerves. —— They are come; I am ſent for: my ſpirit revolts, but reaſon muſt ſupport me through thoſe humiliating circumſtances.

I appeared before our friendly gueſts with an air of embarraſſment, that, on recollection, confuſes and hurts me, for never did the moſt attentive politeneſs exert itſelf with greater energy, to lift us into conſequence with

with ourſelves, than did this worthy uncle and niece. They uſed every poſſible argument to ſhake my father's purpoſe of retiring to the North of Scotland, but he ſtood firm to the reſolution he had formed, when he found that I had not the ſmalleſt objection to his plan. Fortunately, this houſe being taken for us, by Mr. Macniel, jun. during our excurſion to the Iſle of Arran, he had engaged it only for a month, till he knew how it ſuited us. Ten days of this month is unexpired; a day had been appointed to meet the proprietor, with an intention of taking it by the year; *now* we ſhall give notice of our quitting it.—My father ſeemed ſo delighted with the ſituation, ſo happy in the acquaintance of the Macniels, that, when I reflected on the comforts he muſt give up, I confeſs to you a momentary thought croſſed me to avail myſelf of Mr. Cranfield's liberality, in the deluſive hope that it was poſſible our money might be recovered. But I ſoon bluſhed at the mean idea. The five hundred pounds were put into my hands:

for the purpoſes of benevolence, to relieve the wants of the diſtreſſed. I thank heaven, we can have only *artificial* wants; we have yet enough to preſerve us from poverty and contempt, nor ſhall the ſacred depoſit be miſapplied. The worthy donor ſhall ſtill remain unacquainted with our loſs, or he would oppreſs us with offers we could not accept. I am glad that he is now at Naples.

My ſiſter, being ignorant of the tranſaction between my father and that Abbot, can endure no pain on the buſineſs, for we ſhall be ſilent on the ſubject to all that are not immediately concerned. You only are my confidante; not even my faults ſhall be ſcreened from your indulgent eye, at leaſt ſuch as I am conſcious of. Self-love doubtleſs renders me blind to many, but it is a common error, and I am a very fallible creature.

I have more than once repented that I mentioned my chimerical proſpects to you; it

it would have been time enough when the affair had been ſettled, I ſhould have ſpared you then the pain I know you will feel on reading this letter; but I aſſure you that this evening both my father and I have cheerfully talked over our future plans, and are determined to ſoar above the malice of fortune;—ſhe has no power over our minds. Heaven bleſs you, my good friend, ever!

Your affectionate

MARY BOYLE.

Direct as uſual.

LETTER XXIV.

MRS. ROWE TO MISS BOYLE.

MY dear, my amiable, young friend, how my admiration for you increaſes hourly! Minds like your's are fitted to bear adverſity, and riſe ſuperior to the inconſtancy of fortune, or the malice of the world. Providence generally proportions our trials to our prudence and ſtrength of mind;—bear up then nobly under your diſappointments, for I know you are as fitted to ſhine in adverſity, as to ornament a proſperous ſtate.—Yes, I ſhall glory in my beloved pupil:—wherever you go, to whatever ſolitude

ſolitude you wander, preſerve your fortitude, your cheerfulneſs, and health: doubt not that you will one day be recalled to the world, and prove an ornament to ſociety, and the boaſt of your admiring friends.

Your laſt letter followed me to London, and was the cauſe of three days delay in my acknowledgment of it. My uncle, poor man, though tottering on the verge of the grave, with an incurable diſorder, added to ſeventy-two years, yet eagerly graſps at a ſhadow, and, equally againſt advice and probability, would undertake a fatiguing journey here, to place himſelf under the care of an advertiſing empiric, who pretends to infallibility in curing all diſorders. Peremptory in his reſolutions, my little reaſoning availed nothing, and therefore I accompanied him.

The laſt ten years have been ſpent in throwing away his fortune on ignorant pretenders, and gradually undermining his conſtitution, by taking ſuch an immenſe quan-

tity of drugs, without receiving the ſmalleſt benefit. Long before I came to reſide with him, the faculty had pronounced his caſe hopeleſs as to cure, though he might live many years; and, indeed, ſeventy-two is not a ſhort ſpan. May he obtain the relief he ſo ſanguinely expects!

Yeſterday two gentlemen called on my uncle. We were playing back-gammon, his chief amuſement. One of them, who was introduced to me as a Mr. Gardner, I thought uncommonly pleaſing in his perſon and manners; I ſhould ſuppoſe about thirty, but free from every degree of foppiſhneſs and folly,—a polite manner, that denoted the gentleman, and a cheerful ſobriety, if I may ſo expreſs myſelf, that diſplays good ſenſe and good-nature.

After a little common converſation, Mr. Gardner ſaid he had only been a few days in town, having ſpent a month at Stanton-Place. This caught my attention: I haſtily aſked, "Were Lord and Lady Gaywit there?"

there? and obſerved with ſome ſurpriſe that he changed colour at the queſtion, and anſwered with a little heſitation, "Yes, madam, I left them there, but I apprehend their ſtay will be ſhort.—Are you acquainted with them?"

"Not with his lordſhip: I reſided ſome years in Lady Gaywit's family."

"Aye, the more to my ſhame," ſaid my uncle bluntly.

"My niece's father was my younger brother, a clergyman. He married for love, had a large family, buried his wife, and, at his own death, left his children nothing but an excellent education. I had married a fortune, but had no children. My wife was a gay expenſive woman; ſhe would not hear of any thing being done for poor Frank's children at home: I therefore helped them a little, ſent the boys to ſea, and would have placed the two girls in a ſhop, but this ſaucy proud creature choſe to be independent, and exert her talents for the benefit of others. So ſhe reſided in

Mr. Boyle's family for ſome years; during that time her ſiſter died; and, on the death of my wife, I prevailed with her to forget my neglect of her juvenile years, and reſide with me. She kindly conſented, and to her I am indebted for all the comforts my ill health will allow of.—This, gentlemen, is the hiſtory of my niece"

This ſpeech was delivered with a volubility I could not interrupt, and it would have been ridiculous to have quitted the room; but I certainly looked very fooliſh for a woman of ſix and thirty. The gentlemen applauded my uncle's candour, and paid me ſome very polite compliments.—Mr. Gardner added, "I have been told Miſs Boyle is a very accompliſhed young woman, but not ſo handſome as her ſiſter."

"Perhaps her perſon may not appear equally captivating to a ſuperficial eye, though it certainly has many charms;—but her mind——" and then I indulged in my favourite theme, till my uncle interrupted me

me with a loud laugh. "A truce, a truce, Sarah! why, we ſhall all fall in love, and go to loggerheads for this phœnix. Is ſhe ſhut up in a box, or how comes it ſhe is not married?"

"Becauſe ſhe is unknown, and avoids admiration as ſedulouſly as the generality of young women court it.—But, doubtleſs, ſir, (addreſſing Mr. Gardner,) you think Lady Gaywit very beautiful?"

"I do, madam, think her the loveliеſt woman I ever ſaw, and I believe it is a general opinion, neither is the lady unconſcious of her own charms."

"Perhaps not, (I replied;) from her earlieſt years ſhe was the idol of her mother and aunt, and from infancy accuſtomed to praiſe and adulation."

"Poor Gaywit! (returned he, with a ſhrug and an expreſſive look;) he dotes on his lady, and ſeems inclined to become a reſpectable domeſtic huſband; but Lady Gaywit I foreſee will excite univerſal admiration, and ſeems to have ſufficient animation to enjoy it."

The

The converſation changed to another ſubject, but the obſervation of Mr. Gardner, though in fact it implied nothing wrong in Lady Gaywit, yet there was a meaning in his countenance that on reflection gave me ſome inquietude. You are always ſilent reſpecting your ſiſter, whether by accident or deſign I know not, and perhaps I am wrong to inquire, therefore I will drop the ſubject. I am called upon to go an airing with my uncle. Adieu, my amiable, my reſpected, friend: may every bleſſing attend *you* that is attached to virtue and goodneſs, prays

Your obliged and moſt affectionate

SARAH ROWE.

LETTER

LETTER XXV.

MISS BOYLE TO LADY GAYWIT.

My dear Sister,

WHY are you silent? I have for this last week daily expected to hear from you. Has my last letter* offended? Can you be displeased with the anxiety I expressed, and the disapprobation I avowed to your present frivolities? Am I no longer worthy of your confidence? Ah! my dear Caroline, do not deprive me of your correspondence, nor judge unfavourably of my solicitude for your happiness and honour.

Do

* This does not appear.

Do not trifle with either: you have a huſband who adores you; you have friends who admire you; let your conduct challenge from every one *reſpect*.

Your huſband's friend is entitled to the ſame conſideration you ſhew to others,—politeneſs and general attention; more, no man has a right to claim from a married woman. It is impoſſible Mr. Gardner would preſume to breathe a word to your prejudice; be aſſured it cannot be; and forgive me for ſaying that your conduct ought to be ſuch, that might place the ſuppoſition out of all probabiiity from its ſtrict propriety. Heaven forbid that Lord Gaywit ſhould for a moment doubt your affection for him; but I will not dwell on a thought ſo painful.

Write to me, I beſeech you, as affectionate and unreſerved as ever, if you have any value for my peace. I am going a little excurſion to the North of Scotland, but your letters

letters will travel after me; write, therefore, I conjure you, to account for this alarming ſilence.

I am ever, my dear ſiſter,

Your true friend,

MARY BOYLE.

LETTER XXVI.

LORD GAYWIT TO BEVIL GARDNER, ESQ.

BEAR with me, Gardner, for I am miſerable! My wife, my angel, loves me no longer!—Did ſhe ever love me?—Diſtraction to doubt it! yet a thouſand little

little incidents throw me into the moſt painful incertitude; and *this laſt*, this alarming proof of her indifference cuts me to the ſoul. Could ſhe have inſulted my beſt friend, if my peace were dear to her?—Impoſſible! The damning proof confirms my wretchedneſs. The tyrant ſees her power, ſhe ſees that I adore her, and moſt ungratefully ſhe trifles with my love and anxiety.

I endeavoured to conform to your advice the day you left Stanton-Place. I dreſſed my face in ſmiles, concealed the anguiſh of my mind under an affected gaiety, and was more attentive to the company than uſual. Lady Gaywit wore an air of triumph, and ſeemed to read my ſoul by her penetrating glances.

After tea, when the company walked out, and divided into little parties, ſhe and Sir James contrived to linger behind; I would hope it was in a ſpirit of playfulneſs, to torture me; but I took no notice, and attached myſelf to Mrs. Grantham.

Scamper

Scamper came to us, and was faſtened upon by Lady Penrickard, who looked piqued and angry at Sir James. Almeria and the gentle Maria withdrew to a different part of the garden.

We ſometimes miſſed each other in the ſhrubbery. Turning ſuddenly into one of the walks, we ſtumbled upon my wife and Sir James, he at the very moment lifting her hand to his lips. He ſtarted, and let it drop; ſhe looked confuſed. Mrs. Grantham turned full upon me, but I took no notice, and, with a heart boiling with fury, I conducted my partner into another walk.

"Sir James is a mighty gallant man, (ſaid ſhe.) I thought, when firſt I came to Stanton-Place, he was paying his addreſſes to couſin Almeria. I believe ſhe thought ſo too, for the poor girl is ſtrangely altered, and looks quite woe-begone."

The obſervation fired me: "If I believed Sir James had trifled with Almeria, and had given

given her cauſe to ſuppoſe he addreſſed her, I would ſoon call him to account."

"Nay, (returned ſhe,) it may be only my conjecture, but ſhe certainly appears languid and ill."

The ſubject of our converſation was interrupted by the object of whom we were ſpeaking, and I was ſtruck with her penſive air, ſo very unlike the lively girl we uſed to accuſe of coquetry. My indignation increaſed every moment as I ſurveyed her and I determined to have a converſation with her the firſt opportunity, and obtain her confidence, if poſſible.

When we aſſembled at ſupper, my wife appeared thoughtful, and unuſually ſilent. Sir James trifled with Lady Penrickard: *ſhe* was mighty ſtately; in ſhort, it was the play of croſs purpoſes, and all ſeemed out of humour. Lady Gaywit complained of the head-ache when we retired, and I too truly felt the *heart*-ache. This day we dine with Sir William Allen,—the whole family; for

for the Earl is ſo much better, that he reſolved to accompany us, of courſe Almeria cannot excuſe herſelf.

I have a very great depreſſion of ſpirits: my wife looks cold and uneaſy; my tenderneſs ſeems troubleſome. Lady Henrickard and ſhe ſaid ſome ſpiteful things to each other; I too well comprehend the motives, I hope no one elſe does.—O Gardner! what is become of my gaiety and ſpirits? I muſt, I will, exert myſelf, nor ſuffer this tyrant love to rob me of my peace and temper.

Gardner, I have done with all fond complainings;—my wife is——a common character; as ſuch I deſpiſe her. Infamous and hypocritical, and yet in perſon an angel; who could look in that face, and doubt her innocence?—but ſhe is all art and deception.——I hate her,—yes, I hate her heartily! but I cannot part with her: ſhe ſhall not become the property of another.—O Gardner! I am diſtracted, I cannot write particulars;—I have more to do.

Fear

Fear not, I have no hoſtile deſigns againſt the deſtroyer of my peace; I will not wound the boſom of my father by hazarding the life of his only ſon, for whoſe happineſs he is ſo anxious. I will not be pointed at by the finger of ſcorn for the huſband of a wanton, nor will I give her the power to extend her infamy: I have taken a different reſolution. *You*, and *you alone*, ſhall know the truth. I am now going to—Caroline: ſhe is no longer my wife: if I can command myſelf, you ſhall have the particulars.

Yeſterday, we ſpent the day with Sir William Allen. I ſtrove to appear cheerful, but my obſervations did not tend to make me ſo, and I was more than once attacked by Scamper on the loſs of my ſpirits. The deſert had but juſt been placed on table, and the ſervants withdrawn, before they returned in haſte, ſaying they believed Mr. Hardman's houſe was on fire. (The old fellow had been expected to dinner, but it ſeems had caught a violent cold the other day,

day, and was incapable of coming out.) We all ran into the hall, and ſaw the flames raging with violence; the houſe was not half a mile from Sir William's. We forgot the table, and haſtened to the ſpot, leaving the ladies with the Earl.

Our apprehenſions were too juſt; the houſe was enveloped in flames. The miſerable owner was ſtanding at the door of a cottage, oppoſite the entrance, tearing his hair, and beating his breaſt, in a ſtate of diſtraction; none pitying him, though all were anxious to extinguiſh the fire.—Furniture there was none worth ſaving, but a few valuable paintings; however, every effort was fruitleſs to preſerve the building, which fell in at length, and deſtroyed all hope.

Whether it was the heat that oppreſſed me, or a fearful preſentiment on not perceiving Sir James with us, I know not, but I grew very ſick and diſordered. Sir William, obſerving

obſerving me, drew from his pocket a key. "This opens the oppoſite gate; it is a ſhort and private way through the wilderneſs. Haſten back, my lord, and get ſome refreſhment; tell the ladies the worſt is paſt."

I took the key without a reply, and found it opened into a very ſhort cut acroſs to the houſe; but my ſickneſs grew ſo very oppreſſive, that, ſeeing the top of a ſmall temple among the trees, I walked towards it; and, turning ſhort round to the front, was transfixed with the ſight of Lady Gaywit and Sir James, ſitting on an Indian cane ſofa, one of his arms paſſed round her waiſt, and ſhe reclining her head on his ſhoulder.

My ſoul ſhrinks with horror at the recollection of that moment. I ſtopped ſhort, petrified with ſurpriſe: ſomething I ſaid, but I know not what. Their confuſion and guilt cannot be deſcribed. He ſtarted up, and, forcing a ghaſtly ſmile upon his agitated

features, muttered ſome unintelligible nonſenſe about Lady Gaywit's fainting with terror, to which I made no reply, but a bow and a motion for him to leave us, which he perfectly underſtood, and was out of ſight in a moment. She ſat fixed, pale as death, and every limb trembling. My ſickneſs was vaniſhed; ſuperior anguiſh had driven away all trivial and temporary ailments.

I entered the temple, and ſeated myſelf by her, without having power to articulate a word. Her terror was of much ſhorter duration than my ſurpriſe and grief; for, in a few moments, ſhe turned indignantly upon me.

"Well, ſir, I ſuppoſe your jealous imagination, which has led you to the meanneſs of watching me, may alſo lead you to ſuppoſe me guilty and infamous; but, however ill *you* may be inclined to think of me, I know my own innocence, and will aſſert it, in oppoſition to the jaundiced eye of a jealous huſband."

She was riſing: I took her hand. Her inſolence had reſtored me to ſenſe and indignation.

"Stop, madam; you injure and miſconceive me. I preſume not to judge *unfavourably* of ſuch *innocent* ſituations. Sir James was very kind in being my ſubſtitute: it will be your own fault if any thing tranſpires to give you pain."

She viewed me with wild aſtoniſhment, and you, I dare ſay, muſt be equally ſurpriſed at my moderation. I cannot account for the impulſe of the moment, as I had no time to digeſt any plan, and therefore am ſuperſtitious enough to believe it was a ſudden inſpiration from heaven.

Not another word paſſed between us. I accompanied her to the ſaloon, which opened into the garden, where we found the other ladies, who ſent forth a loud exclamation on ſeeing us together.

"What becomes of your ſuppoſition now, Lady Penrickard?" aſked Almeria.

"Why,

"Why, for once, I may be deceived, (anſwered ſhe;) but pray how came Lord and Lady Gaywit to meet ſo opportunely? I thought you had gone to that old wretched miſer's relief."

"I did go, madam; but, finding all aſſiſtance was uſeleſs, as the houſe could not be ſaved, and there was no danger that the fire would ſpread, I returned, and had the pleaſure of meeting Lady Gaywit in the wilderneſs."

"What uncommon preſcience that of her ladyſhip! (retorted the other with a ſneer) to divine that you ſhould return through that unfrequented path. Had ſhe been in Scotland, one might have complimented her with poſſeſſing the gift of ſecond ſight."

"Without any pretenſions to that gift, (anſwered Lady Gaywit, with a look of contempt,) I can diſcern the full force of your obſervation, and know how much I am obliged for it."

Almeria, who ſaw both ladies ſwelling with reſentment, wiſely put a ſtop to further altercation, by aſking particulars reſpecting the fire. I was giving her what information the diſtracted ſtate of my mind would admit of, when that malicious woman again interrupted me: "Pray, my lord, was Sir James with you?"

"I ſaw him once, (I replied, without looking at Caroline;) they will all return ſoon I ſuppoſe."

In fact, they all returned together, and the converſation was ſo thoroughly engroſſed by the late event, that neither the countenance of Sir James nor Lady Gaywit attracted obſervation. No entreaties had been ſufficient to draw Hardman from his ſmoaking ruins. Curſes, cries, and exclamations, were all they could get from him, nor could they obtain the leaſt poſſible ſatisfaction how the houſe came to be on fire, as he very rarely had a ſpark in his houſe.

We took leave of Sir William, and returned to Stanton-Place. As we paſſed through the hall, Sir James twitched me by the ſleeve; I turned. "A word with you, if you pleaſe," ſaid he.

I ſtepped back as if to ſpeak to the ſervants. "Lord Gaywit, whatever conjectures you may have formed from appearances this evening, I aſſure you, upon my honour, Lady Gaywit is perfectly innocent. If you judge unfavourably of me, I am ready to give you whatever ſatisfaction you may require."

I replied, with great haughtineſs, "My wife's innocence needs no aſſeveration of *your*'s, Sir James, to eſtabliſh it. Whatever *my* ſentiments may be of your conduct, they are lodged in my own boſom. I require no ſatisfaction of any kind from *you*. You are my *father's gueſt*; perhaps, were you mine, I could diſpenſe with your company."

I haſtily walked on, and he followed me. Very few words paſſed between me and my

wife that evening. I told the lingering hours, and laid, forming a hundred ſchemes for my future conduct, to no purpoſe; at length, I recollected that my aunt Eleanor had a houſe in a remote part of Wales, which ſhe had frequently talked of viſiting. I reſolved to frame ſome excuſe for carrying my wife there; but I ſaid nothing to her, until I had talked with my aunt. The imprudent Caroline was equally reſtleſs as myſelf, and I ſaw my behaviour, ſo calm and indifferent, ſurpriſed her.

After breakfaſt I took my aunt aſide, and made known my wiſh that ſhe would invite us into Wales. She looked at me with concern: "I ſhall be very happy to do ſo, but will Lady Gaywit conſent, think you?"

"Leave that to me. Give us the invitation, and ſee if ſhe makes any objections."

After this we all aſſembled in the billiard-room; whilſt there, ſeveral letters were brought from the poſt: Sir James had one,

Lady

Lady Gaywit another, from her ſiſter, which ſhe apologized for withdrawing to read.

Sir James had gone to the window.—"Ah!" (cried he, with ſeeming concern,) how deviliſh unlucky! unexpected buſineſs calls me to town; I muſt ſet off to-morrow, and leave this agreeable ſociety."

Every one expreſſed their regret. I gave him a look which he eaſily tranſlated, I believe. Nothing material paſſed till we met at dinner, when my father again lamented that Sir James muſt leave us, as probably, in another week or ten days, we ſhould all proceed to London.

My wife bluſhed ſcarlet deep, but ſaid not a word.—Then aunt Eleanor took her cue.

"I wiſh (ſaid ſhe) I could perſuade Lord and Lady Gaywit to take a tour into Wales with me firſt. Miſs Penrickard has kindly promiſed to ſpend a few months with me, and

and I ſhould like to ſhew her the romantic beauties of that country, before we ſet down quietly in Berkſhire."

"I accept your invitation with all my ſoul, (I cried out;) and it is impoſſible Lady Gaywit can have any objection. Parliament will break up in a month at fartheſt, the town will grow duſty and empty; my father will ſtay but a very ſhort time."

"What, (cried my father, interrupting me,) do you not intend to be preſented at court before the birth day? Indeed, Gaywit, I muſt *inſiſt* upon *that*."

I was now thrown out of my politics.—After a moment's heſitation, "Well, my lord, then I will compromiſe the matter; let us adjourn to London en famille, we will go through the ceremony of preſentation, and then attend my aunt on a tour into Wales."

"Agreed, (replied my father;) my ſtay will be very ſhort, as the ſeaſon is too far advanced

advanced to be comfortable in London.—It will not be worth while to go into your own houſe; mine is large enough to accommodate you, and as many of our friends as will oblige me with their company."

I ſtole a look at my wife. Her features had brightened up amazingly. Whether ſhe is innocent or guilty, ſhe braves it out.

But what do I talk of innocence?—Can *ſhe* be innocent, who admits ſuch freedoms as I was a witneſs to?—Oh! no, impoſſible!——If ſhe has not fallen into infamy, there is a depravity of mind,—a violation of decency, never, never, to be excuſed!—But ſhe ſhall not make me the public ſcorn, and I will, if poſſible, preſerve her from yet further contamination.

My mind is in tumults! Love and indignation rack me alternately. When I look

look on her, I adore her;—when abſent, I reverſe the faſcinating object, and ſee her fondly reclining on the ſhoulder of Sir James.—Confuſion! my brain is on fire with the idea!—Pity me, Gardner! for never man ſuffered ſuch torturing conflicts as I endure.

This letter, ſo unequal, ſo incoherent, has been the work of three days. Sir James is gone. Curſes on the name, would I had never ſeen him, for he has deſtroyed my peace!

In five days we ſhall be in London; I muſt inſiſt upon your viſiting me at my father's: I will not be denied. Mr. and Mrs. Grantham go to Briſtol. Sir Roger and his lady, to her great mortification, into Cornwall. Maria remains as my aunt's gueſt. Sir William Allen accompanies us to town; he is a worthy man. I hope Almeria will be perſuaded to give him her hand.

I have

I have this moment heard, that unfortunate wretch Hardman is raving mad. His money is buried in the ruins; in ſome vault, it is believed; but he would give no directions where to dig, and could not remove the rubbiſh himſelf. — The conflict between avarice and the apprehenſion of loſing his property, by the diſcovery, has actually driven the old miſer out of his ſenſes.

Oh! I can eaſily believe that any one over-ruling paſſion may diſorder our intellects: I am more than half-mad myſelf!

Scamper is riding up the avenue. I wiſh to fly from myſelf; and even his unmeaning rattle is muſic to the diſcord of my mind.

Farewell. This is the longeſt letter I ever wrote in my life; but I could blot five or ſix ſheets more, were I to expreſs the diſtracted feelings of my heart and my head.

As

As you value the friendſhip of your friend, come to me when I am arrived in town.

Your's,

GAYWIT.

END OF VOL. I.